



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Woodford County
Health Department**

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To: Area Media
From: Andrea Ingwersen

For Immediate Release

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies in Woodford County

Woodford County Health Department (WCHD) officials have recently received a report that a deceased bat collected from a private residence in Metamora tested positive for rabies. This is the first bat to test positive for rabies in Woodford County since 2018.

The bat was found in the same room as a sleeping person so human exposure is unknown. The resident is undergoing preventive rabies treatment. Although people usually know if they have been bitten, bats do have very small teeth, and a bite mark may not be visible. Additionally, rabies can be spread through the saliva of a rabid animal and get into a person's eyes, nose, mouth or open wound. The only way to confirm if a bat has rabies is through laboratory testing. Only in instances when a person or pet has been exposed to a bat will a bat need to be tested for rabies.

Bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Illinois. You cannot tell by looking at a bat if it is rabid. The animal does not have to be aggressive or exhibit other symptoms to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior, such as difficulty walking or an overall appearance of illness, can be early signs of rabies. A bat that is active during the day, found on the ground and unable to fly, is likely to be sick. Such bats should never be handled.

Bats are more active this time of year, which means the possibility of exposure to rabies increases. WCHD would like to remind residents to avoid bat exposure, and vaccinating pets is crucial to preventing rabies transmission. Additionally, bats flying outside at night pose little risk to humans. Bats are naturally more active during the evening from April to mid-October.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Call your physician if you are ever scratched or bitten by stray or wild animals.
- Exercise extreme caution if you see a nocturnal animal, such as a skunk or bat, in daylight hours.

- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with public health officials. Woodford County Health Department cannot remove or handle live animals.
- If you are able to do so without putting yourself at risk for physical contact or being bitten, try to cover the bat with a large can or bucket, and close the door to the room. Call a licensed professional pest control operator to remove the bat.
- Do not handle, feed or attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick wild animals to health. Call an animal rescue agency for assistance. Report strangely behaving stray or wild animals to local animal control.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Maintain homes and other buildings so bats cannot gain entry.
- Be a responsible animal owner. Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all pets (indoor/outdoor). Seek immediate veterinary assistance if your pet has been bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat.

For further questions and additional information, please contact the Woodford County Health Department at (309) 467-3064 or www.woodfordhealth.org

For more information about bats and rabies in Illinois, visit www.dph.illinois.gov

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