



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Illinois Department of Public Health Warns Public to Watch Out for Rabid Bats and Other Animals**

**SPRINGFIELD** –With the weather warming up, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is warning the public to beware of rabid animals, especially bats, as they become more active this time of year. IDPH has received reports of four rabid bats in the state since May 15 from [Champaign, Jackson, Macon and Will counties](#).

“While there is a preventive treatment for rabies, it is one of the deadliest diseases we know,” said IDPH Acting Director Amaal Tokars. “Bats are the most common carriers of the rabies virus in Illinois and are responsible for the vast majority of human rabies cases in the United States in recent years. But they are not the only carrier of rabies. The public should be not approach bats or any wild, unfamiliar or stray animal, and any animal that appears to be sick.”

IDPH stressed that a bite from a rabid animal can be potentially fatal if not treated and that public should take precautions to [keep bats out of their homes](#).

IDPH is also reminding the public make sure that rabies vaccinations are up-to-date for pets and any valuable livestock and horses for whom a rabies vaccine is available. If a pet is exposed to a high-risk wild animal – such as a bat, skunk, raccoon, fox or coyote -- you should contact a veterinarian for advice immediately.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system (brain and nerves). People can get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal. Rabies can also be contracted when saliva or spit from a rabid animal gets directly into a person’s eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound. People usually know when they have been bitten by a bat, but bats have very small teeth and the bite mark may not be easy to see. If you find yourself in close proximity to a bat and are not sure if you were exposed, for example – you wake up and find a bat in your room, do not kill or release the bat before calling your doctor or local health department to help determine if you could have been exposed to rabies and need preventive treatment (i.e. vaccines or other products to stop you from getting Rabies). If the bat is available for testing and test results are negative, preventive treatment is not needed.

If you have been bitten by any animal, seek immediate medical attention. Animal bites may also become infected with bacteria. Rabies preventive treatment, if needed, must begin quickly.

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An animal does not have to be aggressive or exhibit other symptoms to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior can be early signs of rabies. A bat that is active during the day, found on the ground, or is unable to fly is more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often easily approached, but should never be handled.

The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Do not touch, feed, or unintentionally 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 animal control or an animal rescue agency for assistance.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good principle for children to learn to reduce the risk of exposures to rabid animals.
- Maintain homes and other buildings so bats cannot get inside.
- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with animal control or public health officials.
- After consulting with animal control or public health officials, the bat may need to be captured for rabies testing to determine if you need preventive treatment.

Steps you can take to capture the bat if animal control is not available are:

- When the bat lands, approach it slowly, while wearing gloves, and place a box or coffee can over it.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
- Tape the cardboard to the container securely, and punch small holes in the cardboard, allowing the bat to breathe.
- Do not come into physical contact with a bat.

For more information about [rabies](#) and [keeping bats out of your home](#), visit the IDPH [website](#).

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