

NEWS RELEASE

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Rabid Bat Found in Lemhi County; Rabies is Fatal if Treatment is Not Administered after Exposure

Eastern Idaho – EIPH has confirmed that a bat found in Lemhi County has tested positive for rabies. Rabies is a fatal viral illness in humans and other animals. Household pets and other animals can be exposed to the virus by playing with sick bats that can no longer fly normally.

While most bats are harmless and do not carry rabies, they are the only animal in Idaho that is a natural reservoir for the virus. Vaccination against rabies for humans and animals is important to protect against illness.

Ken Anderson, Epidemiologist at Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) states, "It is important if you have been bitten, scratched, or have come in close contact with a bat to contact your health care provider immediately. Rabies is fatal once symptoms appear, but it can be prevented almost 100% of the time when the rabies vaccine and other medical therapies are administered soon after the exposure occurs."

To protect yourself and your pets, EIPH offers the following tips:

- **Do not touch a bat with your bare hands.** If you have contact with a bat or wake up to find a bat in your house, seek medical advice immediately. Collect the bat in a plastic bag without touching it, **wash your hands thoroughly**, and call your local public health office for possible testing. Any bat found in a home should be tested for rabies if there is any suspicion that exposure to a person or pet might have occurred. The teeth of a bat are very small, and it is possible to be bitten while sleeping without feeling it.

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- Because household pets and other animals can be exposed to the virus through contact with sick bats, it is important to make sure that animals (dogs, cats, horses, etc.) are up to date on vaccinations against rabies. If your household pet brings a dead bat home, collect it in a plastic bag without touching it, **wash your hands thoroughly**, and call your local public health office for possible testing. Also, contact your veterinarian to make sure your animal's rabies vaccinations are up-to-date.
- Parents should teach their children to avoid bats, never bring them to school for show-and-tell, and to let an adult know if they find one.
- Bat-proof your home by plugging all holes in siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter.

Call EIPH epidemiologists at **(208) 533-3152** to determine whether testing the bat for rabies is indicated. If it is determined that you or your pet may be at risk of exposure to rabies, testing of the bat is a free service.

For information about bat proofing your home, visit the [CDC Rabies](#) page.

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