

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Rabid Bats Found in Bonneville and Jefferson Counties; Rabies is Fatal if Treatment is Not Administered after Exposure**

**Eastern Idaho** – Following two separate incidents where domestic pets encountered rabid bats in Idaho Falls and Rigby, local health officials are warning Eastern Idaho residents that rabies poses a serious threat to human and animal health.

Because bat bites can go unnoticed, anyone who suspects they, a family member, or a pet may have been exposed to a bat must seek immediate medical attention before symptoms develop.

**"It is essential to contact your health care provider immediately if you may have come into contact with a bat,"** said Jordan McAdam, Epidemiologist at Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH). **"If your pet has caught or played with a bat or other wild animal, contact your veterinarian immediately."**

While the pets were exposed to infected bats, rabies is preventable in humans and domestic animals through immediate medical attention. Bats are the primary natural reservoir for the virus, and encounters increase in late summer/early fall.

Dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses all require primary rabies vaccines and routine boosters every one to three years. Even indoor pets can be exposed if wildlife, such as bats, enter the home.

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

- **Protect Beforehand:** Always vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses; even indoor pets could be exposed to rabies if a bat gets into a home. Ensure your pets receive rabies boosters.
- **Avoid Direct Contact:** Never handle a bat with bare hands. Use thick gloves if you must secure a live or dead bat for testing, keeping it in a non-breakable container or double-bagged clear plastic.

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- **Coordinate Free Testing:** If you, a family member, or a pet have had direct contact with a bat or suspect an exposure, contact Eastern Idaho Public Health or your healthcare provider immediately. Call EIPH at (208) 533-3152 to coordinate rabies testing. Testing is provided as a free service if a potential exposure risk to humans or pets is identified.
- **Act Quickly on Exposure:** Seek immediate medical advice if you touch a bat or wake up with one in your room. Call your veterinarian immediately if a pet interacts with a bat, skunk, fox, or other wild animal.
- **Bat-Proof Structures:** Plug all holes in cabin or home siding and maintain tight-fitting window screens. Detailed instructions can be found on the CDC website at: <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/management/index.html>.

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