



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

For Immediate Release

September 26, 2017

### **RABIES CONFIRMED IN CLARK COUNTY BAT**

NEILLSVILLE, WI — Bob Leischow, Clark County Health Officer, announced today that a bat from Clark County has tested positive for rabies. This is the first case of animal rabies in the county since 2011. Rabies is a viral infection that affects the central nervous system and is almost always fatal for people and animals. Once symptoms of the illness begin, survival is rare; however, it can be prevented if anti-rabies treatment is given after the exposure occurs. Health officials note that this should be a reminder that rabies still occurs in Wisconsin, which averages 20-30 cases of animal rabies annually. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services-Division of Public Health, the vast majority of animal rabies cases occur in bats, although the disease has also been detected in pets, livestock, and in other wild animal species in the recent past. The last case of human rabies in Wisconsin occurred in 2010.

Because the rabies virus persists in wildlife reservoirs, there is an ongoing risk of rabies exposure to humans and domestic animals. Public health officials advise the following measures be taken to minimize the risk of rabies:

- 1) Protect your pets by keeping them all current on rabies vaccinations. Vaccinated domestic animals also provide an important buffer between humans and the wildlife that can harbor rabies. Even indoor cats and dogs can be exposed to rabies from bats that can enter homes.
- 2) If you are bitten by an animal, cleanse the bite wound thoroughly with soap and water, and then contact your healthcare provider and local health department. The biting animal should be safely captured if possible. If it is an owned animal, obtain the name and address of the animal owner. As long as the animal is available for observation (in the case of domestic animals) or testing (for wild animals), there is rarely any need for the exposed person to receive the series of shots to prevent rabies.
- 3) A bat in the same room as a deeply sleeping person or an unattended infant may constitute an exposure to rabies. Persons who have had any physical contact with a bat, or who have been close to a bat and cannot rule out the possibility of physical contact, may need to receive the rabies shots unless the bat can be captured and tested. Testing wild animals for rabies is performed at no cost to the exposed person. A doctor should be consulted about the need to get the preventive rabies vaccinations.
- 4) Avoid contact with all wild animals, especially those acting abnormally or unusually friendly. Do not keep wild or exotic animals as pets, regardless of how young or cute they may be.
- 5) Teach children a healthy respect for unfamiliar dogs and cats, and to never approach wild animals.
- 6) Exclude bats from living quarters by keeping screens in good repair and by closing up any small openings that could allow them to enter.

Animal bites or other potential rabies exposures can be reported to the local police department and Veterinarian. For more on rabies visit [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies) or call the Clark County Health Department at 715-743-5105.

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