



KANE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
MEDIA ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fifth bat tests positive for rabies

The Kane County Health Department announced today that another bat found at a residence in Aurora has tested positive for rabies. This is the fifth bat found in Kane County this year that has tested positive; four from Aurora and one from Elgin.

Two residents of the Aurora home awoke to find a bat in their bedroom and are now undergoing post exposure prophylaxis, a series of five shots administered over 28 days. A bat found in a room with a person who is asleep or in a room with a child or individual who is awake but can not clearly communicate if a bat had physical contact with them is assumed to have bitten the individual. It is not safe to rely on finding visible signs of a bite as the teeth of a bat are tiny and razor sharp.

The number of bat rabies cases is on the rise throughout Illinois. "Considering the number of rabies-positive bats found in surrounding counties, it is not surprising that we are seeing an increase here," Kane County Health Department Executive Director Paul Kuehnert said. "The best advice is to never handle wild animals and always remember to have up-to-date vaccinations for your pets. Additionally, we urge individuals to report exposures to your health care provider or health department."

As of Sept. 7, Illinois has recorded 87 confirmed cases of rabies in animals this year, all found in bats. This compares to 46 reported all of last year. During 2006 one bat with rabies was found in Kane County, the first since 2001. Bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Illinois. A case of human rabies has not been reported in Illinois since 1954.

All homeowners should check their homes for potential entry points. Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats entry into your living quarters. Any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch should be caulked. Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics, fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking, and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly. Information about excluding bats may be found at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcbats.htm>.

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The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Report the following to your healthcare provider or local health department for evaluation to determine if post exposure prophylaxis is indicated:
 - All animal bites
 - Live bat found in room with a sleeping person
 - Live bat found in a room with a small child or other person who cannot clearly indicate whether a bite or saliva exposure may have taken place
 - Presence of bat saliva in a mucus membrane or skin abrasion
 - Physical contact with a bat without heavy gloves where either a bat bite or bat saliva entering a mucus membrane or skin abrasion cannot be ruled out
- Avoid direct contact with unfamiliar animals. Do not handle, feed or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
 - Never bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick 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.
- Be a responsible pet owner. Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats and ferrets. This requirement is important to not only keep your pets from getting rabies, but also to provide a barrier of protection for you if your animal is bitten by a rabid animal.
- Keep pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat, seek veterinary assistance for your pet immediately.
- Call the local animal control agency to remove contained stray animals in your neighborhood.

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Humans get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal or if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth or a wound. Without preventive treatment, rabies is a fatal disease.

Any wild mammal such as a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote or bat, can have rabies and transmit it to humans. It is not possible from looking at an animal to tell whether it is rabid. The animal does not have to be foaming at the mouth or be exhibiting other symptoms to have rabies.

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Changes in any animal's normal behavior such as difficulty with walking, or just an overall appearance of illness, can be early signs of rabies. For example, skunks, which normally are nocturnal and avoid contact with people, may appear friendly or ill and may approach humans during daylight hours. A bat that is active during the day, found in a place where bats are not usually seen (such as in a home or on the lawn), or is unable to fly is more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often easily approached but should never be handled.

More information is available by calling Kane County Animal at (630) 232-3555 or Aurora Animal Control at (630) 897-5695.

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