



NEWS RELEASE

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IDPH Reports Discovery of First Two Rabid Bats of 2024, Warns Public to Watch Out for Rabid Bats and Animals

CHICAGO – With the weather warming up, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is warning the public to beware of wild animals that may carry rabies, especially bats, as they become more active this time of year. The warning follows the discovery since May 10 of the first two rabid bats of 2024 in the state in Cook and Will counties, IDPH said. The bats were recovered inside two homes in those counties and subsequently tested positive for rabies.

“Rabies is a fatal but preventable disease,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “It is important that Illinois residents know how to prevent rabies exposure to protect themselves and their loved ones. Bats are the most common carriers of the rabies virus in Illinois but not the only carrier. Illinois residents should stay away from bats and any wild, unfamiliar, or stray animal, as well as any animal that appears to be sick. Groups of bats can move into people’s homes and that underscores the importance of knowing the ways of [keeping bats out of your home](#).”

Public health officials stress that if a bat is found inside a home, it is important to try and cover it with a container and contact animal control so it can be tested for rabies. (See below for tips on how to capture a bat.)

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

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system. People can get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal. Rabies can also be contracted when saliva 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. If the bat is available for testing and test results are negative, preventive treatment is not needed.

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If you have been bitten by any animal, seek immediate medical attention. Bite wounds can become infected and if the animal is high risk for rabies, preventive treatment, must begin quickly.

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, you may need to capture the bat for rabies testing to determine if you need preventive treatment.

Steps you can take to capture the bat 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.

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

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