

NEWS

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Meridian Bat Tests Positive for Rabies; Public Health Urges Precautions

Meridian — A bat found in Meridian has tested positive for rabies. The bat was found in the back yard of a home in Central Meridian, and is the first bat of the year in Idaho to test positive for rabies. There is no known exposure to people or pets.

Each year, rabid bats are discovered throughout the state. Public health officials want to remind people to take precautions around bats and make sure that their dogs, cats and horses are up-to-date on their rabies vaccine. Last year in Idaho, 10 bats tested positive for rabies, with two of the reports occurring in Ada County.

“Bats are the main source of rabies exposures in Idaho, and every year we receive reports of rabid bats,” said Sarah Correll, Central District Health Department (CDHD) Epidemiologist. “We encourage parents to talk to their children about the importance of not touching bats or other wild animals, because doing so can have serious medical consequences.”

Rabies can cause a fatal illness. People should call their health care provider immediately if they have been bitten or scratched by a bat. Medical therapy given to people soon after a possible rabies exposure is extremely effective in preventing rabies.

One warning sign that a bat may carry rabies is daytime activity, which is unusual behavior for healthy bats.

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

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands;
- If you have had an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention;
- If you come in contact with a bat, save the bat in a container without touching it and contact your district health department to arrange testing for rabies. Whenever possible, the bat should be tested to rule out an exposure to rabies;
- Always vaccinate your pets for rabies, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home; and
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows.

For more information on bats and rabies, visit www.cdc.gov/rabies. To track the number of rabid bats in Idaho, visit:

<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/DiseasesConditions/RabiesInformation/tabid/176/Default.aspx>