



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 9, 2009

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Bat Tests Positive for Rabies

BLOOMINGTON- A bat found at a Normal home late last week has tested positive for rabies. This is McLean County's first rabid bat in 2009. About 37 bats in Illinois have tested positive for rabies so far this year. In 2008, two bats in McLean County tested positive for rabies compared to 103 throughout the state.

Wild animals, especially bats, raccoons and skunks can carry rabies. Although no human exposure occurred at the home where the bat was found, most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by exposure to bats. Bat bites are often undetectable because their teeth are so small and sharp. Anyone coming in close contact with a bat should seek immediate medical attention. Also call Animal Control at 888-5060, especially if the bat is inside the home.

Dogs and cats are at risk too, so vaccinating pets is essential in reducing rabies exposure. The McLean County Registration of Dogs and Cats Ordinance requires that all dogs and cats over four months be vaccinated and registered annually with the McLean County Health Department within 30 days of vaccination. Bats in the home put even indoor cats at risk for rabies.

"This is the time of year when bats become more prevalent and can get into the home. It is important to be aware of them and also vaccinate pets to protect them from rabid bats and other animals," said McLean County Health Department Director Walt Howe.

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system. Humans get the virus from the bite or scratch of an infected animal. It is almost always fatal, so immediate medical treatment is necessary to stop the infection and prevent the disease. Once symptoms appear it is too late.

Tips for rabies safety include:

- Call your physician if you are ever scratched or bitten by stray or wild animals.
- Never approach stray or wild animals, even if they seem friendly. Reinforce this message with children.
- Exercise extreme caution if you see a nocturnal animal, such as a skunk or bat, in daylight hours.
- Let stray or wild animals that roam onto your property wander away on their own. Bring pets and children inside.
- Block sites around your house that wild animals may use for sleeping or raising young.
- Remove sources of food from the outside of your home by capping garbage cans, feeding pets indoors and limiting access to your garden.
- Call your veterinarian if your pet appears to have been scratched or bitten.
- Report strangely behaving stray or wild animals to Animal Control at (309) 888-5060.

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