

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 21, 2020

Media contact: George Thompson

Center for Human Development Public Health

541-624-2176

info@chdinc.org

Health Advisory: Rabies detected in bat in Union County

Center for Human Development (CHD) public health has been notified by Oregon State University, Veterinary Laboratory that a bat tested positive for rabies in Union County, Oregon. Public health officials are reminding community to be aware of the risk for exposure to rabies and to avoid contact with bats. Keep your pets vaccinated for rabies.

Rabies Virus

Rabies is a fatal but preventable viral disease. It can spread to people and pets if they are bitten by a rabid animal. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system. If a person does not receive the appropriate medical care after a potential rabies exposure, the virus can cause disease in the brain, ultimately resulting in death.

Rabies in Oregon

Animal rabies occurs year-round in Oregon, but has its highest incidence during late spring, throughout the summer, and into early-fall since wild animals are most active during these seasons. All mammals, including humans, are susceptible to rabies. Increased human outdoor activity during warmer months results in increased opportunities for people to be exposed to the rabies virus.

In Oregon, the main reservoir of rabies is bats. Bats that come in contact with pets and people may place them at risk of exposure. Rabies is almost always contracted by exposure to a rabid animal. Rabid bats in Oregon are rare. Typically the only bats tested for rabies are those that are already found sick, and of these sick bats, only about 10% tested for rabies test positive for the disease every year.

Bats and Our Ecosystem

Bats play an important role in the ecosystem, especially in controlling insects at night. They are an important insect predator; they often eat mosquitoes and can catch over 1,000 tiny insects in an hour which contributes to about \$3.7 billion worth of insect control for farmers in the USA each year. Oregon has 15 species of bats, eight of which are Oregon Conservation Strategy Species.

Handling Bats

Most often, humans are exposed to rabies by picking up a presumed sick or injured bat. If you find a bat during daylight hours, it is most likely unhealthy and should be avoided. **Handling bats is not recommended**, but if you must handle a bat, it should be done with sturdy gloves or an implement, such as a shovel. Direct hand contact with bats should always be avoided. Place the bat in a secure container and contact the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Center for Human Development (CHD).

Health Advisory

The purpose of this health advisory is to review:

- Rabies Prevention
- Rabies Transmission
- Guidance and support for suspect cases

Rabies Prevention

PETS: Visit your veterinarian with your pet on a regular basis and keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all cats, ferrets, and dogs. Maintain control of your pets keeping them under direct supervision.

HUMANS: Watch wildlife from a distance. Avoid approaching bats, wildlife or other mammals flopping around on the ground or acting unusual.

Rabies Transmission

Rabies virus is transmitted through a bite of an infected animal .

Guidance and Support for Suspect Cases

If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, or unsure, talk to a healthcare provider or call your local Public Health Department about your need for post exposure prophylaxis. Rabies is 100% preventable through prompt appropriate medical care. Anyone bitten by a bat should be vaccinated for rabies immediately if the bat is not available for testing. If the bat has been captured, do not crush the bat or throw it away, as intact bats can be tested for rabies, which can help you avoid post exposure rabies shots.

Resources

Learn more about rabies below:

Rabies Information (OHA) <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASES/CONDITIONS/DISEASESAZ/RABIES/Pages/rabies.aspx>

Rabies Information (CDC) - <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

Bats and Rabies - <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/index.html>

Local Public Health Directory

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/ProviderPartnerResources/LocalHealthDepartmentResources/Pages/lhd.aspx>

Local Oregon Fish and Wildlife

<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/> (ODFW) hotline at 1-866-968-2600.

END