



Eastern Idaho Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

1250 Hollipark Drive, Idaho Falls, ID 83401 ▪ 208-533-0310 ▪ www.EIPH.Idaho.gov

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Mimi Taylor, PIO
Office: (208) 521-6722

Rabid Bat Found in Jefferson County; Rabies is Fatal if Treatment is Not Administered after Exposure

EASTERN IDAHO – A bat was found in the yard of a residence in Rigby/Jefferson County and was later identified as having rabies. While most bats are harmless and do not carry rabies, they are the only animal in Idaho that is a natural reservoir for the virus. Rabies is a fatal viral illness in humans and other animals. Household pets and other animals can be exposed to the virus by playing with sick bats that can no longer fly normally. This is why it is important for people to make sure that their animals are vaccinated against rabies.

Ken Anderson, Epidemiologist at Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) says, “It is important if you have been bitten, scratched, or have come in close contact with a bat to contact your health care provider immediately.” Rabies is fatal once symptoms appear, but it can be prevented almost 100% of the time when the rabies vaccine and other medical therapies are administered soon after the exposure occurs.”

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

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands. If you have had contact with a bat or wake up to find a bat in your room, seek medical advice immediately. The teeth of a bat are very small and people are sometimes bitten in their sleep without feeling it. Any bat found in a home should be tested for rabies if there is any suspicion that an exposure to a person or pet might have occurred.
- Parents should teach their children to avoid bats, never bring them to school for show-and-tell, and to let an adult know if they find one.
- Only if you or your pet has had contact or may have had contact with a bat, save it in a non-breakable container if it is alive, or sealed and double-bagged in clear plastic bags. Only do this while wearing thick gloves. Call EIPH at 208-533-3152 to determine whether

- More -

testing the bat for rabies is indicated. If it is determined that you or your pet may be at risk of exposure to rabies, testing of the bat is a free service.

- Rabies is deadly for pets, too. Always vaccinate your dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses — even indoor pets could be exposed to rabies if a bat gets into a home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows. For information about bat proofing your home, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/management/index.html>.

If you have any questions, please contact Mimi Taylor at (208) 521-6722.

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