



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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McLean County confirms first rabid bat of 2014

BLOOMINGTON— A bat found outside a rural Heyworth home is McLean County's first rabies-positive bat in 2014. Last year, one bat tested positive for rabies in McLean County, and 1 positive rabid bat was found in 2012. In total, 55 bats tested positive for rabies from 21 counties throughout the state in 2013. So far this year, 33 bats have tested positive for rabies in Illinois.

"As the weather cools, bats are still active and beginning to nest," McLean County Health Department Director Walt Howe said. "It is important for individuals to know how to avoid rabies exposure for themselves and their pets. Vaccinating pets against rabies is a crucial part of preventing rabies transmission to humans."

Wild animals, especially bats, foxes and skunks, can carry rabies. Most of the recent human rabies cases in the U.S. were caused by exposure to bats. Bat bites are often undetectable because their teeth are small and sharp. Dogs and cats are at risk too, and up-to-date vaccinations are essential to reduce the spread of rabies. Bats found in the home even put indoor pets at risk for rabies. McLean County Registration of Dogs and Cats Ordinance requires all dogs and cats over the age of 4 months receive a rabies vaccine and are registered with the health department within 30 days of vaccination.

Bats flying outside at night pose little risk. Bats displaying activity during the day, flopping around on the ground or being in a place where bats are not usually seen, such as a house, should be avoided and individuals should contact local emergency authorities either through dialing 9-1-1 or calling local dispatch centers: Bloomington residents call 309-820-8888, Normal and county residents call 309-888-5030.

Never purposely touch a bat. If a bat is found in a room where someone was sleeping, leave the room, close the door (if possible) to confine the bat to the room, and do not release the bat or attempt to catch it. Call

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emergency dispatch at the numbers listed above. Anyone in close contact with a bat should seek immediate medical attention.

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system. Humans are infected with the virus when the saliva of an infected animal comes in contact with broken skin, through a bite or scratch of an infected animal. When left untreated, rabies is fatal. Immediate medical treatment is crucial to stop the infection and prevent the disease symptoms.

Tips for rabies safety include:

- If a bat is in your home, call emergency dispatch who will contact Animal Control; Bloomington residents call 309-820-8888, Normal and county residents call 309-888-5030.
- Never approach stray or wild animals, even if they seem friendly. Reinforce this message with children.
- Report strangely behaving stray or wild animals to Animal Control.
- Call your physician if you are ever scratched or bitten by stray or wild animals.
- Exercise extreme caution if you see a nocturnal animal, such as a skunk or bat, in daylight hours.
- Keep dogs and cats rabies vaccinations up-to-date.
- Call your veterinarian if your pet appears to have been scratched or bitten.
- 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.

For more information about McLean County Animal Control's bat response, animal vaccination and registration requirements and other animal control programs, call (309) 888-5060 or visit <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov>.

Information on bats and ways to keep bats out of residences are available at www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcbats.htm. For information about wildlife found in central Illinois, visit the Illinois Department of Natural Resources website at www.dnr.illinois.gov.

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