



Seventeen bats in Illinois tested positive for rabies, IDPH reminds residents to stay safe

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SPRINGFIELD – As bats become more active, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding people to beware of potentially rabid bats and other animals. So far this year, 17 bats have tested positive for rabies.

“People can receive preventive treatment if they are exposed to an animal infected with rabies,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D. “Although most bats are not infected with rabies, it’s important to avoid handling bats, get and keep your pets vaccinated, and make sure your home has no openings where bats can come in.”

While the number of bats submitted for rabies testing has ranged from 1,300 to 1,700 each year over the past five years, the number testing positive for rabies is typically around three percent. More bats are typically submitted for testing in August and September.

The only way rabies can be diagnosed in a bat is by laboratory testing. Signs that a bat or other animal could have rabies are a general appearance of sickness or a change in the animal's normal behavior. However, you can’t tell just by looking at a bat if it has rabies. Only in instances when a person or pet has been exposed to a bat will the bat need to be tested for rabies.

Bats, like all wild animals, should never be handled. Do not feed, touch, or adopt wild animals or stray dogs or cats. If you find yourself near a bat (in your home or other indoor area) close the door to the room where the bat is and call the local health department. They can help determine if you could have been exposed to rabies and if the bat needs to be tested. If you are bitten by a bat or other animal, you should seek

medical attention immediately. The local health department and animal control should also be notified and the animal captured without damaging its head (put a container over it) and only if direct contact with the animal can be avoided.

To keep your pets safe, make sure they are vaccinated and don't allow them to roam freely. If a wild animal comes on your property, bring children and pets inside and allow the animal to wander away. If the animal is acting abnormally, contact animal control.

More information about rabies can be found at www.dph.illinois.gov.