

First Positive Case of Rabies in 2021 Found in a Bat

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SPRINGFIELD – As the weather begins to warm up, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding people to beware of potentially rabid bats and other animals. While August and September are typically when the greatest number of bats are submitted for rabies testing, last week the DuPage County Health Department reported this year's first bat testing positive for rabies.

“Most cases of rabies found in Illinois are found in bats,” said Director Ezike. “Although the majority of bats are not infected with rabies, it is important to avoid touching bats and to make sure your home has no openings where bats can enter.”

In addition to bites, rabies can also be contracted when saliva from a rabid animal gets directly into a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound. People usually know when they have been bitten by a bat, but bats have very small teeth and the bite mark may not be easy to see. If you find yourself in close proximity to a bat and are not sure if you were exposed, (e.g. you wake up and find a bat in your room), do not release the bat. Call your doctor or local health department to help determine if you could have been exposed to rabies and if you need preventive treatment. Without quick, preventive treatment, rabies is typically fatal. If you have been bitten or have had direct contact with a bat, seek immediate medical attention.

If the bat is available for testing and the results are negative, preventive treatment is not needed. You cannot tell simply by looking at a bat if it has rabies. The only way rabies can be confirmed in a bat is through laboratory testing. Only in instances when a person or pet has been exposed to a bat will the bat need to be tested for rabies.

If a bat enters your house or work area, it will need to be captured. To capture the bat, try to confine it to a room. If you can do it safely, trap the bat in a box and slide cardboard underneath. Wear leather gloves when doing this and avoid any skin contact with the bat. Call the local health department or animal control to help determine the next steps.

To keep your pets safe, make sure they are vaccinated against rabies 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. Bats, like all wild animals, should never be handled.

More information about [rabies](#) and how to keep [bats out of your home](#) can be found at www.dph.illinois.gov.