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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Health District urges residents to take precautions after rabid bat discovery

TWIN FALLS COUNTY- A bat, caught southeast of the Twin Falls County Airport, tested positive today for rabies. The South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) reminds residents to take precautions around bats and make sure that their dogs, cats and horses are vaccinated for rabies.

This is the first bat this year to test positive for rabies in south central Idaho. Rabies can cause a fatal viral illness in both people and their pets.

“Bat bites are extremely small and hard to see,” said Christi Dawson-Skuza, SCPHD Epidemiologist. “If you find a bat was in your home while someone was sleeping, contact your health care provider right away and, if able, bring the bat to the Health District for testing.”

If you catch a bat and need it tested, please call (208) 737-5904 or (208) 737-5971 to speak with a Health District epidemiologist. SCPHD urges residents to only attempt bat captures if they can do it safely and avoid direct contact with the bat at all times.

While most bats are harmless and do not carry rabies, they are the only animal in Idaho to naturally carry the virus. Most animals, including household pets, can become exposed to the virus by playing with sick bats that can no longer fly.

“Rabies is almost always fatal,” Skuza said, “It is crucial you keep yourself and your animals away from any infected bats.”

To protect yourself from rabies, please:

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands. Be very suspicious of bat activity during daylight hours.

- If you have an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention immediately, save the bat in a container without touching it and contact your district health department to arrange for rabies testing.
- Always vaccinate your pets, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter. Typically bat-proofing is best after most bats have migrated away in the fall.

For more information on bats and rabies please visit www.phd5.idaho.gov or

<https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/DiseasesConditions/RabiesInformation/tabid/176/Default.aspx>