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**PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release**

## **Health District urges residents to take precautions after rabid bat was discovered in Twin Falls County**

TWIN FALLS COUNTY- A bat, caught in Twin Falls County, tested positive this week for rabies. The South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) urges residents to be extra careful and avoid all contact with bats because rabies can cause a fatal viral illness in both people and their pets.

This is the first bat this year to test positive for rabies in south central Idaho. No humans were bitten by the bat.

“Normally, bats are not dangerous but it’s never a good idea to harass or play with any wild animal,” said Tanis Maxwell, SCPHD Epidemiology Program Manager. “If you see an active bat during the day, or any other unusual behavior, it is best to avoid that animal to prevent exposure to diseases like rabies.”

If you catch a bat and need it tested, please call (208) 737-5912 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 can be fatal for humans and animals.” Maxwell said, “It is crucial you keep yourself and your animals away from any infected bats.”

**To protect yourself from rabies:**

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands. Be very suspicious of any bat active during daylight hours.
- If a bat attacks you 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 maintain 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](http://www.phd5.idaho.gov) or <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/DiseasesConditions/RabiesInformation/tabid/176/Default.aspx> or <https://idfg.idaho.gov/blog/2017/06/i-found-bat-my-home-what-do-i-do>