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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Health District urges residents to take precautions after rabid bat discovered in Blaine County

Blaine County - A bat caught in Blaine County tested positive for rabies today. This is the first bat this year to test positive for rabies in south central Idaho.

The virus can cause a fatal disease in both people and their pets. The South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) reminds residents to take precautions around bats and make sure their dogs, cats and horses are vaccinated for rabies.

“Bat bites are extremely small and hard to see. Any suspected exposure should be taken seriously as rabies is nearly always fatal,” said Tanis Maxwell, SCPHD Epidemiology Program Manager. “If you have contact with a bat, or find one in your home while you were sleeping it’s important you contact your health care provider right away and ask about treatment”.

Bats play an important role in the ecosystem and most do not carry rabies. If you see a bat, please give it plenty of space. Do not try to touch, kill, or trap the bat unless you are concerned someone came into contact with the animal. Only attempt a bat capture if you can do it safely and avoid direct contact with the animal at all times.

If you have contact with a bat and need it tested, please call (208) 737-5912 or (208) 737-5971 to speak with a Health District epidemiologist. Do not bring live bats into health district offices.

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.

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 or <https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/DiseasesConditions/RabiesInformation/tabid/176/Default.aspx> or <https://dhwblog.com/2021/06/08/rabies-in-idaho-would-you-know-what-to-do-if-you-find-a-bat/>

Educational video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0IUxHkbXzI&feature=emb_imp_woyt