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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Health District encourages precautions after rabid bat discovered in Blaine County

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

The rabies 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.

“Rabies is nearly always fatal if left untreated,” said Tanis Maxwell, SCPHD Epidemiology Program Manager. “It is so important you avoid coming in to contact with bats at any time. If you have direct contact with a bat, or find one in your home while you were sleeping it is important you contact your health care provider right away and ask about treatment”.

Bats play an important role in the ecosystem and most are healthy. If you see a bat, please give it plenty of space. Avoid direct contact with bats and never handle a bat with your bare hands. If a bat appears to be acting injured or sick, please give it plenty of space and contact Idaho Fish and Game for assistance.

If you’ve had any direct contact with a bat, or you find a bat in the same room with a person who might be unaware they had direct contact with a bat (for example, an unattended child, someone deeply asleep, or an intoxicated person), safely capture the bat without allowing direct contact with your skin. Call (208) 737-5912 or (208) 737-5971 to speak with a health district epidemiologist. Do not bring live bats into health district offices.

To protect yourself from rabies:

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands.

- If you've had any type of direct contact with a bat or found a bat in a room with someone who may have had contact with a bat and didn't realize it (because they were sleeping, a child, intoxicated, etc.) safely capture the bat without touching it with your bare skin and contact your health care provider or local public health district for a risk assessment.
- Always vaccinate your pets, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by following acceptable management practices. Contact the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for information on how to safely evict and exclude bats. Unless a public health threat exists (e.g., bats getting inside living spaces), the best time to evict and exclude bats from structures is from early September through mid-October—after bat maternity season and before bats go into hibernation.

For more information on bats and rabies please see the following:

A helpful video about how to react if you find a bat in your home:

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/blog/2017/06/i-found-bat-my-home-what-do-i-do>

More helpful information about bats and rabies from Idaho Fish and Game:

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/press/how-stay-safe-if-you-encounter-bats>

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/press/protect-people-protect-bats-and-avoid-rabies>

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/blog/2017/06/i-found-bat-my-home-what-do-i-do>