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## FULTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Date: August 30, 2023  
To: Area Media  
From: Katie Lynn, Administrator  
Re: News Release For Immediate Release

### Local Public Health Officials Warn People To Avoid Contact With Bats

The Fulton County Health Department is advising the public about the potential risk of exposure to rabies after two rabid bats were identified in Fulton County. According to Katie Lynn, Administrator of the Fulton County Health Department, the bats were tested on August 29, 2023.

Rabies is a deadly virus that affects the brain and nervous system. People can get rabies from being bitten by an infected animal, or when saliva from a rabid animal comes into contact with a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound. If someone wakes up and finds a bat in the room, it is considered an exposure, even if no wounds are found on the person. A bat's teeth are small, so someone who has been bitten by a bat may not know it, or may be unable to communicate it (for example, very small children).

If you find a bat in your home, contact the Fulton County Health Department at (309) 647-1134 to determine if it needs to be submitted for rabies testing. Avoid killing or releasing the bat until you talk with a health department representative to determine the appropriate next steps. If you have been exposed to rabies, preventive treatment, known as PEP, is necessary. But if the bat can be safely captured and tested for rabies, and the test comes back negative, no preventive medication is required.

Steps you can take to capture the bat:

- When the bat lands, approach it slowly, while wearing thick gloves, and place a box or coffee can over it.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
- Tape the cardboard to the container securely, and punch small holes in the cardboard, allowing the bat to breathe and call the Health Department.
- Do not come into physical contact with a bat.
- If the bat is dead, put it in a plastic container and keep it cool while you contact the Health Department.

The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Do not touch, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick wild animals to health. Call animal control or an animal rescue agency for assistance.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good principle for children to learn to reduce the risk of exposures to rabid animals.
- Maintain homes and other buildings so bats cannot get inside.
- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with the Health Department.

- After consulting with animal control or public health officials, the bat may need to be captured for rabies testing to determine if you need preventive treatment or if your pet may have been exposed.
- Keep pets up to date on rabies vaccinations.

Information about excluding bats may be found at <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/structural-pest-control/bats-exclusion.html>

Information about rabies can be found at <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/rabies.html>