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For Immediate Release

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Bats Activity is Increasing

HDNW offers information on how to capture and when to test bats

Bats are more active this time of year, which means the possibility of exposure to rabies increases. Bats are the most common way Michigan residents come in contact with rabies, which can spread to people and pets through an infected animal's bites or scratches.

"While rabies can be deadly, it is a preventable disease," says Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) Medical Director Dr. Joshua Meyerson. "We encourage residents to be prepared with knowledge of how they can avoid contact with and manage a bat in their house, garage, barn, or other structure."

Here is some quick information:

- People and domestic animals should avoid contact with bats. Any direct contact should be considered a possible exposure to rabies.
- Other possible exposures can include finding a bat in the same room as a person who may not be aware that contact has occurred, such as a sleeping person, a child, or someone who is mentally impaired or intoxicated.

From January to June of 2023, there were 25 potential exposures to rabies in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. As fall approaches, prepare yourself to know how to react if you become potentially exposed.

Here are some quick tips:

- If someone has been bitten by an animal or has been in contact with, exposed to, or bitten by a bat, contact HDNW as soon as possible at (800) 432-4121. The law requires all animal bites to be reported to local animal control and the local health department.
- If someone may have been exposed to a bat, do not let the bat go. Capture the bat for rabies testing and immediately contact HDNW. Information on how to safely capture a bat can be found [here](#) or at this web address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhnV5WJQBA>. Unfortunately, rabies testing in bats requires looking for the virus in brain tissue, therefore, the bats must be euthanized.
- If the bat is unavailable for testing, treatment will be recommended to prevent rabies. If the bat is tested and does not have rabies, treatment is not needed.
- It is important to protect pets against rabies. Dogs, cats, and ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies by a veterinarian. If a pet might have been bitten or scratched by a wild animal such as a bat, raccoon, or skunk, contact a veterinarian for instructions on how to prevent rabies.

Because rabies testing requires sampling brain tissue, bats brought in for testing must be dead (euthanized) prior to bringing it to the health department. HDNW does not euthanize bats. The expired bat must be stored in a container or Ziploc in a refrigerator prior to delivery to the health department for testing.

More information about rabies and a map of rabies positive animals in Michigan can be found at www.Michigan.gov/rabies.

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