

News Release

June 11, 2018

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies

WASHINGTON COUNTY, UT – The Southwest Utah Public Health Department (SWUPHD) is reporting a recent human exposure to a bat which was infected with rabies. The individual is receiving preventive vaccination.

“Rabies vaccine is very effective when given soon enough”, says Dr. David Blodgett, SWUPHD Health Officer. “Every year, dozens of people in our district are vaccinated after actual or suspected exposure to rabid animals. Once a person shows symptoms, the disease is nearly always fatal.”

Human cases of rabies in the United States are rare, with only one to three cases reported annually. Some of those cases were infected outside of the country.

Rabies is a deadly virus spread to people from the saliva of infected animals. In the US, those animals include bats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, and skunks. Cases in domestic dogs and cats are fewer in number due to vaccination programs, but can still occur. Most of rabies cases identified in southwest Utah occur in bats or animals that have been bitten by bats.

To avoid rabies infection:

- Back off and don't touch any wild animal that lets you get close to it or seems sick.
- Seek immediate medical care if you've been bitten by any animal. If the animal can be contained or captured without further injury to yourself or others, do so. It can then be tested for rabies to determine if you should receive rabies shots.

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- Seek immediate medical attention if you may have been exposed to an animal suspected of having rabies, even if you're unsure you were bitten. If you have physical contact with

a bat or awaken to find a bat in the room, assume you've been bitten. Consultation with a doctor and the SWUPHD can determine if vaccinations are a good idea based on the circumstances of your situation.

- Vaccinate your pets against rabies.
- Visit **swuhealth.org/rabies** for more information and resources.

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The mission of the Southwest Utah Public Health Department is to protect the community's health through the promotion of wellness and the prevention of disease. Visit our website at www.swuhealth.org