



P. O. Box 850 • Caldwell, ID 83606 • (208) 455-5300 • FAX (208) 454-7722

# News Release

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Laurie Boston  
(208) 455-5325  
(208) 899-1268 cell  
[laurie.boston@phd3.idaho.gov](mailto:laurie.boston@phd3.idaho.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CALDWELL BAT TESTS POSITIVE FOR RABIES**

Southwest District Health officials confirmed today the bat captured near the Indian Creek Bridge in Caldwell on Tuesday has tested positive for rabies. Prior to capture, the bat bit a young girl playing near the bridge. The family of the girl has been notified and treatment will begin today. While most bats are harmless and do not carry rabies, it is best to avoid them if possible –especially if they are exhibiting unusual behavior.

“We are relieved the young girl has been identified and is receiving treatment,” said Jennifer Tripp, Preventive Health Program Manager for Southwest District Health. “Anyone who is bitten or scratched by a bat should wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water and seek immediate medical treatment. Anyone who awakens to a bat in their sleeping area should also consider themselves potentially exposed. Medical therapy administered to people after exposure to a rabid animal is extremely effective in preventing rabies. In turn, if you know your pet has been bitten or exposed to a bat, contact your veterinarian. Whenever, possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a public health laboratory to be tested to rule out an exposure to rabies,” she stressed.

Rabies is an infectious, viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and wild and domestic animals, including dogs, cats, and horses. It can be fatal if left untreated. Southwest District Health would like to caution everyone to avoid potential contacts with bats and to make sure household pets are up to date with their rabies vaccinations.

“Any bat that exhibits unusual behavior such as being active during the day, unable to fly, or in a place where bats are not usually seen, is more likely to have rabies,” said David Loper, Director Environmental Health Services for Southwest District Health. “Lab testing is the only way to know for sure, but your awareness of this activity is very important,” he said.

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To protect yourself and your pets, Southwest District Health offers the following tips:

Do not touch a bat with your bare hands.

If you have an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention immediately. Collect the bat in a container-- **without touching it**, and contact your local health district for testing options.

Always vaccinate your pets, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.

If you or your child awakes in the presence of a bat, discuss the situation with your medical provider. Bats have small teeth and people are sometimes bitten in their sleep without feeling it. The bat should be tested for rabies if there is any question that an exposure may have occurred.

Bat-proof your home or cabin by checking chimneys, plugging any holes in siding, and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows and doors. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter.

For further information about bats and instructions on how to properly handle and package a bat for testing, call your Southwest District Health at 455-5400. Information on rabies can also be found at the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/).

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