



# Panhandle Health District

*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

## Bat Tests Positive for Rabies at Priest Lake

**Melanie Collett/Panhandle Health District**

**BONNER CO., ID** – Today, Panhandle Health District (PHD) reported that a dead bat, found along the shore of Priest Lake, has tested positive for rabies. A woman discovered the bat on July 7<sup>th</sup> while picking up debris and unintentionally handled the bat with her bare hands. Tests by the Idaho State Lab confirmed the bat was infected with rabies. As a precaution, the woman is now receiving post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) vaccine treatments to prevent illness.

Rabies is a preventable disease caused by a virus that people and other mammals can get through the bite of a rabid animal, most commonly, bats. Rabies infection in humans and animals is fatal without timely medical intervention.

“In this case, we don’t believe anyone was bitten by the rabid bat,” said PHD Staff Epidemiologist, Dave Hylsky. “Transmission of rabies may also occur if the saliva, blood or fluids from an infected animal comes in contact with a person’s eyes, nose, mouth or open wound. We want to take every precaution to ensure anyone in contact with an infected animal is protected.”

This incident is a reminder for North Idaho residents to avoid contact with all bats and to make sure their dogs, horses and other pets are up to date on their rabies vaccinations. Last year in Idaho, 11 bats tested positive for rabies. One was from Kootenai County and one from Boundary County. The last human case of rabies in Idaho was reported in 1978.

Hylsky continues, “Less than 1% of bats carry rabies, but one warning sign that a bat may carry rabies is daytime activity, which is unusual behavior for healthy bats.”

To protect yourself and your pets, Hylsky and other public health officials offer the following tips:

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands;
- Do not disturb resting (“roosting”) bats;
- Bat-proof homes and cabins by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows;
- Teach children to avoid wild animals, like bats and to let an adult know if they find one;
- Take precautions when camping, hunting or fishing. Avoid sleeping on the open ground without the protection of a closed tent or camper.

If a bat is found in a home and a possible exposure cannot be ruled out or if a pet or human has direct contact with a bat, the bat should be tested for rabies. The bat should be trapped and brought to the Panhandle Health District dead and sealed in a double plastic bag. You can learn more about bats and your health [here](#) or by calling (208) 415-5220.