



State of Utah

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## News Release

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### Seven Bats Test Positive for Rabies in Utah

Last week, the Utah Public Health Laboratory confirmed the seventh case this year of a bat which tested positive for rabies. This serves as a reminder to the public to be aware of the [health](#) risk of being exposed to rabies through contact with bats and other wildlife that may be infected. Another common route of exposure is through contact with pets or livestock that have had contact with potentially infected wildlife.

Signs of rabies include obvious changes in normal behavior like aggression, attacking without provocation, foaming at the mouth, no interest in food or water, staggering, or paralysis. Wild animals may act uncharacteristically tame. Infected bats may be seen flying around during the daytime, resting on the ground, or may show no noticeable signs at all.

If you observe an animal exhibiting any of these signs or think that a pet or person may have been exposed to a rabid animal, call 1-888-EPI-UTAH (374-8824) [or your local health department](#) to report it and receive instructions for submitting animals for testing and post-exposure protocols. All human and animal exposures to bats need to be reported regardless of whether the bat appears to be rabid.

[If a person or pet is bitten by a bat, immediately wash the wound. If possible, the bat responsible for the bite should be captured while wearing leather gloves, and tested for rabies. Call your local animal control office or Utah Division of Wildlife Services to collect the bat. NEVER handle a bat with bare hands. The bat may have rabies and must be tested to determine whether the bite victim needs rabies vaccination.](#)

Vaccines for pets and livestock are very effective at preventing the disease. While most people are aware of the importance of ensuring dogs are up to date on rabies vaccinations, it is equally important that cats and horses receive rabies vaccinations. Cats are the most common domestic animal to be reported as positive for rabies in the United States. A typical exposure scenario is a housecat that is found playing with a dead bat or leaves a dead bat on the doorstep. Making sure that pets are protected against rabies using an approved vaccine administered

by a veterinarian will save owners a great deal in terms of time, money, and grief should their animal be exposed and they are forced to choose between euthanasia or a costly and lengthy quarantine.

Historically, 15-25 bats test positive for rabies each year in Utah, many of which are submitted for testing after exposure to pets or humans has occurred. Wild carnivores such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes are also considered high risk species in a potential exposure situation. There is no treatment for rabies once clinical signs appear and it is always fatal. Therefore, all cases of potential exposure need to be taken seriously and reported as soon as possible.