

News Release

For more information, contact Pam Palm,
740-507-6533 or ppalm @knoxhealth.com



11660 Upper Gilchrist Rd. Mount Vernon, OH 43050
PH 740-392-2200 Fax 740-2392-9613
www.knoxhealth.com

**For Immediate Release:
June 8, 2018**

Rabid bat identified in Fredericktown

The Knox County Health Department has confirmed that a bat found in the Fredericktown area has tested positive for rabies. This is the first confirmed case of rabies in Knox County since 2012.

“The rabid bat was found by an alert vet-tech in a store parking lot,” said Environmental Health Director Nate Overholt. “The vet-tech noticed the bat not behaving normally, contacted the Fredericktown Police Department, who secured the animal and turned it over to the health department.” The bat was then sent to the Ohio Department of Health laboratory for testing.

While the most cases of rabies in Knox County in the past 25 years have involved bats, it’s important to remember that most bats do not have rabies, said Overholt. “But a bat that is active by day, is found in a place where bats are not usually seen, such as in a room in your home or on the lawn, or is unable to fly, it is far more likely than others to have rabies,” said Overholt. “Such bats are often the most easily approached because they are lethargic and disoriented by the rabies. Therefore, it is best never to handle any bat and to keep your pets away from them.”

“The key to protecting your pets is to have them vaccinated, said Overholt. The rabies vaccine is available from any local veterinary office. “For humans, the best prevention is to avoid physical contact with a rabid animal,” said Overholt.

Rabies can also be fatal to humans if they are not treated. People get rabies from the bite of an animal with rabies. Rabies can also be spread if the saliva of a rabid animal comes in contact with a person’s eyes, nose or mouth. Treatment involves a series of vaccinations.

- **MORE** -

If you are bitten by a bat or saliva from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound — wash the affected area thoroughly and get medical advice immediately. Whenever possible, the bat should be captured and brought to the health department where it will be sent to a laboratory for rabies testing. There is no charge to submit a bat for rabies testing. The health department is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If the bat is caught on the weekend, put it in a container and refrigerate it until it can be brought to the health department. Or contact law enforcement which can contact health department officials to come pick up the bat

People usually know when they have been bitten by a bat. However, because bats have small teeth which may leave marks that are not easily seen, there are situations in which you should seek medical advice even in the absence of an obvious bite wound. Those situations would include: when a bat is found in a room with a sleeping person; when a bat is found in proximity to an unattended child who is not able to describe what happened; or when a bat is found in a room with an individual under the influence of alcohol or drugs or with other sensory or mental impairment.

“It is frequently much easier to determine the rabies status of a bat which has potentially exposed someone to rabies than to determine the likelihood of the actual exposure,” explained Overholt. “Thus, in circumstances where there is reasonable probability of exposure, people are advised to capture the bat and call the health department.” On average, about 6% of bats tested by the Ohio Department of Health Laboratory are positive for rabies. Therefore, most bat-related post-exposure treatments can be avoided if the bat is captured and tested.

To catch a bat, you will need leather work gloves, a small box or coffee can, a piece of cardboard and tape. When the bat lands, approach it slowly, while wearing the gloves, and place the box or coffee can over it. Slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard to the container securely, and then contact the health department to make arrangements for rabies testing.

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. It can only be confirmed by laboratory testing. Rabies is usually fatal to animals. While there is early treatment for adults, there is no treatment for an animal infected with rabies. Bats are just one of a few animals that are common carriers of rabies. Other animals that can have rabies and transmit it to humans are raccoons, foxes, skunks and coyotes.

For more information on rabies, check the health department website at www.knoxhealth.com, or contact Overholt at the health department at 399-8004 or noverholt@knoxhealth.com.