

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies in Hitchcock County

A bat in Hitchcock County has tested positive for rabies. This is the third positive rabies case confirmed in the Southwest Nebraska Public Health district (SWNPHD) this year. “This is the first positive rabies case in a bat that we have been notified of in southwest Nebraska for many years,” explains Melissa Propp, Public Health Nurse. “Bats are particularly active this time of year and are helpful in controlling the insect population. However, during this time of year they are more likely to come into contact with people and animals.”

Not all bats carry rabies. According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) you can't tell if a bat has rabies just by looking at it. Rabies can only be confirmed by laboratory testing. Any bat that is active by day or is found in a place where bats are not usually seen like in your home or on your lawn could potentially be rabid. A bat that is unable to fly and is easily approached could very well be sick.

Rabies is a fatal illness that is transmitted through a bite from an infected animal. Bats are a concern because their teeth are tiny, and a bite may not be felt or may not leave any noticeable marks. If a person has any physical contact with a bat or finds a bat in the room of a sleeping person or unattended child, the bat should be captured safely and submitted to your local veterinarian for rabies testing.

If you find a bat in your home:

- Put on leather work gloves. Capture the bat safely by using a small container such as an ice cream bucket or can and use a piece of cardboard large enough to cover the top completely.
- After the bat lands, approach it slowly and place the container over the top of it, then slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
- If you know for certain that there has not been any contact with any person or pets, continue to hold the cardboard over the container until you reach the outdoors. Release the bat away from people or pets.
- If the bat touches any exposed skin while you're capturing it, wash the area immediately with soap and water.
- If you have contact with the bat or are unable to determine if there has been contact with people or pets, securely tape down the cardboard and take the bat to your local veterinarian for testing.

It is important to teach children about animal safety. They should never handle any wild animal or domestic animal that they do not know. For more information about bats and rabies, visit cdc.gov/rabies/bats or call Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department at 308-345-4223.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. For more information call Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook (one block north of Arby's) and 501 Broadway (south entrance) in Imperial. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Twitter.

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