



**PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**  
707 NORTH ARMSTRONG PLACE  
BOISE, ID 83704-0825  
TEL. (208) 327-8639  
FAX (208) 327-8595  
**cdhd.idaho.gov**

# NEWS

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**Contact:**

Christine Myron, Public Information Officer  
Desk 208-327-8639  
Cell 208-871-1712  
cmyron@cdhd.idaho.gov

## **Ada County Bat Tests Positive for Rabies**

*Central District Health encourages caution and protection for people and their pets*

**Ada County** — A bat found in the backyard of a Meridian home has tested positive for rabies. This is the first rabid bat reported in the Treasure Valley and increases the state’s rabid bat count to six so far this season. There was no human contact with the bat; however, a dog that may have had contact with the bat was given a rabies booster vaccine as a precaution. The bat was safely collected and submitted for testing.

Because rabies infection is virtually 100 percent fatal in people and animals, Central District Health (CDH) reminds people to avoid contact with bats, which can be a carrier of the rabies virus. In Idaho, rabid bats are typically reported between March and November. Last year, 12 bats tested positive for rabies statewide; 4 of those bats were in Ada County. Public health officials typically see an uptick in calls and concerns from the public related to bat exposure in late August and September when Idaho bats are often migrating.

Bites are considered the primary way rabies is transmitted, but waking up in a room with a bat, without having a clear idea of the bat’s behavior during the night can also put people and pets at risk for rabies infection.

**Whenever possible, a bat found in an area (inside or outside) where people or pets may have been exposed should be captured and submitted for rabies testing.** Specific steps should be followed when collecting a bat for testing. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has produced a video on the safe capture of a bat:

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/blog/2017/06/i-found-bat-my-home-what-do-i-do>

**While bats are an important part of our ecosystem and most do not carry rabies, CDH offers the following tips to protect yourself and your pets:**

- Never touch a bat with your bare hands.
- If you have had an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention.

- If you come in contact with a bat, save the bat in a container without touching it and contact your health department to arrange testing for rabies. Whenever possible, the bat should be tested to rule out an exposure to rabies. During regular business hours in Ada, Boise and Elmore Counties, call 208-327-7499 and in Valley County, call 208-634-7194. After business hours in all counties, call 1-800-632-8000.
- Always vaccinate your pets for rabies, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens on windows. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter.

### **Rabies Treatment**

Medical therapy given to people soon after a possible rabies exposure is extremely effective in preventing rabies. Without timely medical treatment, rabies infection is virtually 100 percent fatal in people and animals.

For more information on bats and rabies, visit [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies). To track the number of rabid bats in Idaho, visit:

<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/DiseasesConditions/RabiesInformation/tabid/176/Default.aspx>

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