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May 23, 2018

Avoiding Possible Exposure to Rabies and Wild Animals

Toledo Lucas County Health Department officials are reminding residents that bats become active during this time of year, which means the possibility of exposure to rabies is increasing. A bat tested positive for rabies in East Toledo this week and was the first in Lucas County for 2018.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system in humans and other mammals. A person may contract rabies through a bite, scratch, or saliva from an infected animal. A bat bite or scratch may not be seen or even felt by the injured person due to the small size of its teeth or claws. A potential rabies exposure should never be taken lightly. If untreated, rabies is fatal.

Animals do not have to be aggressive or behaving erratically to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior can be early signs of rabies. Bats that are on the ground, unable to fly, or active during the day are more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often easily approached but should never be handled.

Recommendations to help prevent the spread of rabies:

- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with animal control or public health officials. It may be possible to test the bat and avoid the need to receive rabies treatment.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats, ferrets and other animals you own

Ohio Administrative Code 3701-3-28 states: "Whenever a person is bitten by a dog or other animal, report of such bite shall be made within 24 hours to the health commissioner of the district in which such bite occurred." Please call the Health Department at 419-213-4100 option 3 to report a bite or with additional questions.

For additional resources on animal bites and rabies, please visit:
<http://www.lucascountyhealth.com/community-health/animal-bites/>

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