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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Preventing Rabies in Pets: Don't Wait, Vaccinate

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. This week, a bat tested positive for rabies, and was the first in Lucas County for 2019.

Rabies is a preventable viral disease most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. A person may contract rabies through a bite, scratch, or saliva from an infected animal. A bat bite are very small and you may not be able to see the bite mark on a human or pet. A potential rabies exposure should never be taken lightly. If untreated, rabies is fatal.

- 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 to determine if rabies treatment is needed.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

The Health Department and Center for Disease Control recommends to visit your veterinarian with your pet on a regular basis and keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all cats, ferrets, and dogs. Maintain control of your pets by keeping cats and ferrets indoors and keeping dogs under direct supervision. Spay or neuter your pets to help reduce the number of unwanted pets that may not be properly cared for or vaccinated regularly.

While wildlife are much more likely to be rabid than are domestic animals in the United States, people have much more contact with domestic animals than with wildlife. Your pets and other domestic animals can be infected when they are bitten by rabid wild animals, and this type of "spillover" increases the risk to people.

Keeping your pets up to date on their rabies vaccination will prevent them from acquiring the disease from wildlife, and thereby prevent possible transmission to your family or other people. Additionally, pet owners must keep paperwork for proof their animal received the appropriate vaccines.

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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