



County of Yolo

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Potential Rabies Exposure- Close call with a Rabid Bat

Woodland—A Yolo County youth recently underwent rabies prevention shots, or prophylaxis, after handling a bat that tested positive for rabies. Health authorities are concerned that the rabies prevention message is not getting to the public. “Unfortunately, we see lots of cases where young people or even adults pick up and handle sick or dead bats without using protective measures,” states Bruce Sarazin, the Yolo County Health Department’s Director of Environmental Health. “There is no way for someone to know if these sick or dead bats have rabies unless the animals are tested in our lab,” Sarazin adds.

Animals are tested each year for rabies in Yolo County. In fact, Yolo County tallied 21 rabies-positive animals in 2008 – all of them were bats. This number of rabies-positive animals is the highest in the State. Although Yolo County tests several dogs, cats, and other animals each year, bats continue to top the list of rabies-positive animals.

Being able to test the animal is important. Rabies is 100% fatal, but is also 100% preventable through either not touching or being bitten by an animal, or receiving the prophylaxis quickly following the bite or exposure. Being able to test the animal after someone has been exposed can determine if they need to receive the prevention shots.

“Yolo County has one of the largest bat colonies in California, and with that distinction, our residents need to take extra precautions,” states Dr. Joseph Iser, Yolo County Health Department Director-Health Officer. “While these animals serve an important ecological role, they can also be carriers of a deadly disease.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by rabies virus from bats.

There are several instances every year in Yolo County where individuals have found bats in a room in their house and have let the bat go. They are unsure if the bat has touched them or bitten them. Because the bat is unavailable for testing, they have then had to undergo the series of prevention shots.

All residents of the County are warned to avoid not only direct contact with bats but especially those that are sick or are showing abnormal behaviors, such as lying on the ground or being out during the daytime. Any bats, healthy, sick, or dead, that have come in contact with people, pets

or livestock should be isolated and contained for testing whenever possible. Bats found inside your home should be contained and reported, even when you're not sure if direct contact has been made with the animal. Reports should be filed with the Health Department immediately at 530-666-8646 or Yolo County Animal Services at (530) 668-5287.

Other wild animals in our area known to carry the rabies virus are skunks and foxes. Wild animals should not be kept as pets. It is very important to report any contact or bites from warm-blooded animals to the Health Department as soon as possible. Pet owners are advised to vaccinate and keep current rabies vaccinations of their dogs and cats.

For more information about bats and rabies, please view the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) informative brochure on the Yolo County Health Department's website at <http://www.yolocounty.org/org/health/bulletins/bats.asp>.

For a website designed especially for helping children learn about rabies, please visit the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/kidsrabies/FastFacts/rabies.htm>.

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