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Avoid touching bats to prevent rabies exposure

(Ogden, UT) – A bat found in Huntsville has tested positive for the rabies virus prompting Weber-Morgan Health officials to issue a reminder to residents to avoid touching unfamiliar or wild animals.

“The majority of our bats in our population are healthy and tend to keep to themselves,” says Amy Carter communicable disease nurse with the Weber-Morgan Health Department. “However, if you see one in the daylight, or if it’s in a place where you or your pet can pick them up and play with them, there’s a good chance it is ill.”

Rabies is a virus that has fatal consequences. The virus spreads through exposure to the saliva of an infected animal. In Utah, bats are the most common carrier of the rabies virus. Skunks, raccoons, foxes and unvaccinated cats and dogs can also carry the disease.

Bat bites and scratches, in particular, can be very small and difficult to see. Carter said finding a bat in a sleeping area is considered an exposure.

“The bat will need to be tested for rabies to determine any needed treatment for those who have been exposed,” Carter said. “Try to cover it with a heavy blanket or plastic container and call your local health department or local animal control agency.”

Individuals who have had direct skin contact or have been bitten or scratched by a bat should first wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, then follow up with a medical provider or local emergency room.

To learn more about bats and rabies, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/education/> or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zjg_FHqIFnU. If you have additional questions or have been bitten by an animal, please contact:

- Weber-Morgan Health Department, (801) 399-7250.
- Division of Wildlife Resources, 801-476-2740.
- Or your local animal control agency through Weber County Dispatch, (801) 395-8221.

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