



Grant County Health Department

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For Immediate Release: Health Officials Urge Caution Around Wild Animals *Protect Yourself from Exposure to Rabies*

The Grant County Health Department wants to remind people to use caution around wild animals to protect against rabies, a viral disease transmitted by bites from infected animals.

“The best method of prevention is to use caution around unfamiliar animals and to not handle wild animals especially if they appear to be sick.” says Jeff Kindrai Director/Health Officer for the Grant County Health Department. Bats are of particular concern in Wisconsin and recently a bat tested positive for rabies in Grant County. While it is not believed that anyone or any pets had direct contact with the positive bat, information was shared with those that may have had an exposure. According to the CDC, about 6% of bats test positive for rabies.

If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound immediately with plenty of soap and water and contact your physician and local health department. If you can do so safely, capture and confine the animal without damaging the head so it may be observed or tested for rabies.

Often, people turn loose or destroy the animal, rather than safely capturing it. In the vast majority of cases, if the animal is either placed under observation or tested for rabies, no treatments are needed for the bite victim. However, if the animal is unavailable treatment should be considered.

In this area of the country, bats and skunks are the most likely to carry the rabies virus, but dogs, cats, raccoons, foxes, and other animals can also transmit the disease. To help avoid possible exposure to rabies:

- Avoid contact with wild animals, especially if they approach you or you observe them acting abnormal or sick. These are indicators that they may be infected. Do not try to nurse a sick animal back to health. Call the Department of Natural Resources or a wildlife rehabilitator if you find a sick animal.
- Never touch unfamiliar or wild animals and teach children to do likewise. Stray cats and dogs may not be accustomed to being handled and are more likely to bite.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Even baby animals can carry rabies.

- Walk your dog on a leash and do not let them roam freely where wild animals may be present.
- Secure trash cans and pet foods so they will not attract wild animals.
- Keep bats out of living areas by securing open or loose fitting doors, holes in attics, and fixing unscreened windows and chimneys.

Protecting your home can significantly reduce the potential for rabies exposure for you and your pets. Bat bites are small and may go unnoticed. Most recent human rabies cases in the U.S. have resulted from contact with bats. However, human rabies cases are very rare in the United States.

For more information on rabies contact the Grant County Health Department at 608 723-6416 or visit: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/P-42081.htm>

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