



IONIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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BAT IN IONIA COUNTY TESTS POSITIVE FOR RABIES

On June 6, 2018 a rabid bat was found in Portland on East Grand River Avenue. Unfortunately, several people handled the bat with bare hands and one person was bitten. All exposed individuals are now receiving Rabies Prophylaxis (PEP) treatment. Rabies PEP consists of Human Rabies Immunoglobulin (RIG) and 4 injections of rabies vaccine over a 2 week period.

Rabies is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. The virus is secreted in saliva and is usually transmitted to people and animals by a bite from an infected animal. Less commonly, rabies can be transmitted when saliva from a rabid animal comes into contact with an open cut on the skin or the eyes, nose, or mouth of a person or other animal. Once the outward signs of the disease appear, rabies is almost always fatal.

Most cases of rabies occur in wild animals – mainly skunks, raccoons, bats, coyotes, and foxes. Rabies also occurs in dogs, cats, and cattle in significant numbers and while not as common, has been diagnosed in horses, goats, sheep, swine, and ferrets. The following animals **do not** transmit rabies: chipmunks, guinea pigs, mice, shrews, muskrats, gerbils, hamsters, rabbits, squirrels, voles, gophers, moles, rats, and prairie dogs.

All cats, dogs and ferrets need to receive the Rabies Vaccine. Livestock (especially valuable animals such as horses) should also be vaccinated against rabies. Animals in petting zoos should also be vaccinated.

Bats are assumed to have rabies unless proven otherwise by testing. A bat in a home should be safely collected in such a way as to preserve the brain and spinal column for rabies testing. Capture the bat pending consultation with the Ionia County Health Department (616-527-5341 Ext. 295). If the bat is dead, it should be kept cool in a refrigerator but **not frozen**. The items that you need to capture a bat are: leather work gloves, a small box, plastic container, or coffee can, a piece of cardboard, and tape. Once the bat lands, approach slowly (wearing gloves) and place a box or can over it. Slide the piece of cardboard under the container, trapping the bat inside. Securely tape the cardboard to the container.

The Ionia County Health Department will arrange for testing of animals suspected of having rabies **if there is human exposure**. If your pet or livestock is exposed to a bat or other animal suspected of having rabies, call your veterinarian for instructions on delivery and preparation of the suspected animal for testing.

For more information visit: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/bats_&rabies/baths&htm

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