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WHY DO I NEED TO VACCINATE MY PET FOR RABIES?

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Oregon Health officials are reporting that a bat found inside a Medford home. Tested positive for rabies Friday afternoon, according to Oregon State University's Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory in Corvallis.

This is the first bat to test positive for rabies in 2012. Last year, eleven bats, five foxes, and one coyote tested positive for rabies. *Each year, about ten percent of the bats tested are found to have rabies.*

"People can take two precautions to protect themselves and their pets from bats and rabies," said Dr. Emilio DeBess, Oregon health authority veterinarian. "Never handle bats; and make sure your cats and dogs are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations," he said. "Unfortunately, bats carry rabies. If you find a bat during daylight hours it is probably not healthy and should be avoided."

Rabies is a viral disease of mammals that attacks an infected animal's nervous system. The rabies strain found in foxes is from bats. Other strains of rabies found in the U.S. (skunk, fox, and raccoon) are not found in Oregon. Rabies symptoms in wildlife, particularly foxes and raccoons, include leathery, walking in circle, loss of muscular coordination, convulsions, irritability or aggressive disorientation, excessive drooling of saliva, and showing no fear of humans. Report this type of behavior to the Oregon department of fish and wildlife (ODFW) hotline 1-866-968-2600.

People should stay away from bats and not handle them. If you find a bat, contact your local ODFW. If your pet has had contact with a bat, contact your veterinarian.

Typically, animals acquire rabies by eating or coming in contact with a rabid bat. Very few bats in Oregon have rabies and rabies in other wildlife is even

more rare. However, if you know your pet has encountered a bat or been bitten by a wild animal, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Recommendations:

- Vaccinate your pets (dogs and cats) against rabies.
- Watch wildlife from a distance. Don't approach or attempt to handle wild animals.
- Do not feed wild animals.
- Keep garbage in secure containers and away from wildlife.
- Feed pets indoors.
- Seal openings in attics, basements, porches, sheds, barns, and screen chimneys that might provide access to bats and other wildlife.