



## COUNTY OF LAKE

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Local bat tests positive for rabies – A reminder to protect people and pets**

A bat found in Hidden Valley Lake recently tested positive for rabies, resulting in treatment of a person who came in contact with the animal.

Bats are wonderful animals and they are important to our ecosystem, but there is reason to exercise caution around them. Although most bats do not have rabies, bat variant rabies exists throughout California and can infect any mammal, including humans.

The rabies virus is found in the animal's saliva. Exposure can occur due to bites or direct contact with infected animals that groom themselves by licking their fur. Bat bites may be unapparent, such that a person who discovers a bat in a room where they were sleeping should be considered exposed.

Only rarely is rabies diagnosed in domestic pets, since it is preventable through vaccination. However, unvaccinated dogs and cats are susceptible to rabies and are at particular risk for exposure in rural environments where they may come into contact with bats or other wildlife, such as skunks, fox, and raccoons. A case of human rabies in 2011 was suspected to be the result of contact with unvaccinated cats.

For people who are exposed to rabies, post-exposure treatment is highly effective in preventing the infection as long as it is given before the person becomes symptomatic. Once symptoms of infection begin, the infection is nearly 100% fatal.

Recommendations to prevent rabies include:

- Vaccinate all dogs and cats
- Keep your pets where they are supervised and protected against exposure to wildlife
- Avoid contact with feral dogs and cats and other wildlife
- Seek prompt medical treatment for bites or exposures to sick or unvaccinated animals. Discuss post-exposure preventive treatment with the healthcare provider.

Post-exposure treatment can be avoided if the biting dog or cat can be observed under quarantine for a 10-day period. However, exposure to wild animals requires euthanasia and testing of the animal or, if the animal cannot be located, a strong recommendation will be made for the bite victim to receive post-exposure preventive treatment.

Contrary to the legendary and frightening rabies prevention treatments of many years ago, current post-exposure treatment now involves only a series of 4 shots in the arm spread out over a period of two weeks and one additional shot of antibody specifically against rabies virus on the first day.

For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/index.html>