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NEWS RELEASE

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Benton County bat tests positive for rabies

CORVALLIS, Ore. –The Benton County Health Department has confirmed that a resident was bitten by a bat and that the bat has tested positive for rabies. This is the first positive bat for rabies in Oregon in 2016.

On Wednesday April 20, the Health Department was informed by a resident that he had been bitten by a bat early that morning. The man awoke to a stinging pain in his hand and discovered that he had been bitten by a bat. The man and his wife were able to safely catch the bat and bring it to Benton County Environmental Health Division for testing. The bat was then sent to the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory for rabies testing.

The man has begun post-exposure rabies treatment which entails an initial dose of rabies immune globulin and a rabies vaccine with 3 subsequent treatments at days 3, 7 and 14 as directed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Oregon Health Authority.

“Rabies is present in the bat population and bats are the primary reservoir of rabies in wild animals for our area of the country,” said Bill Emminger of Benton County Environmental Health. “If you must handle a bat, it should be done with sturdy gloves or an implement such as a shovel. Direct hand contact with bats should always be avoided.”

Emilio DeBess, from the Oregon Health Authority, stated “All pet owners should make certain that their dogs and cats are vaccinated against rabies. Protecting pets from rabies can provide a buffer zone of immune animals between humans and rabid wild animals such as bats.”

Rabies symptoms in wildlife can include lethargy, walking in circles, and loss of muscular coordination, convulsions, irritability, aggressiveness, disorientation, excessive drooling and showing no fear of humans. Animals displaying these behaviors should not be approached or handled. Animal control or wildlife authorities should be contacted. The local county Health Department should be consulted whenever there has been human or pet contact with bats or any animal that appears to be sick, injured or has bitten a human or pet.

For more information about rabies go to the Oregon Health Authority website at <https://public.health.oregon.gov/diseasesconditions/diseasesaz/Pages/disease.aspx?did=41> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/rabies/.

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