

2012: First positive rabies cases in Oregon

Two bats tested positive for rabies in Oregon this month – one right here in northeast Portland - which seems reason enough for Pet Talk to remind pet owners about the importance of rabies vaccinations.

The rabid bat in Multnomah County was found by a woman who noticed a cat playing with a bat. The woman took the bat and was bit in the process. The bat tested positive for rabies on Tuesday – the first rabid bat found in Multnomah County since 2008. The cat was euthanized.

Another bat tested positive for rabies in a Medford home on May 11.

When an unvaccinated dog or cat encounters a rabid animal, “there are two options: a 6-month quarantine or euthanasia,” says Dr. Emilio DeBess, state public health veterinarian.

Cats, dogs, rabbits and ferrets should all receive the rabies vaccine.

Because they are natural predators, cats are at higher risk of encountering bats. That makes them more prone to contracting rabies, a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and is fatal once symptoms occur. In Oregon, about 10 percent of bats each year test positive for rabies.

That’s why state health officials urge pet owners to make sure their pets are vaccinated against rabies. State law requires all dogs in Oregon to have the vaccination, but for cats the law varies by county, DeBess says. In [Multnomah County](#), all licensed pets are required to have the vaccine.

If you see foxes, raccoons or other animals showing odd behavior such as lethargy, convulsions, walking in circles, drooling and lack of fear around humans, you should report it to the [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) hotline at 866-968-2600.

And of course, “If you find a bat during the daylight hours, it is probably not healthy and should be avoided,” DeBess says.

If your pet does encounter a bat, you should call your veterinarian immediately.

The Oregon Health Authority urges pet owners to:

- Get your pets vaccinated against rabies.
- Watch wildlife from a distance. Never approach or try to touch wild animals.
- Don't feed wild animals.
- Keep garbage in secure containers inaccessible to wildlife.
- Feed your pets indoors.
- Securely shut openings in attics, basements, porches, sheds, barns and screen chimneys to prevent access by bats and other wildlife.