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For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223

### **Second Positive Rabies Case**

A second positive case of rabies in an animal has been reported to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD). This positive rabies test was from a bat in Red Willow County. While it is normal to see one to three cases of rabies per year in southwest Nebraska, it is less common to get positive rabies tests in bats. Although bats commonly test positive for rabies in eastern Nebraska, it is much less common for them to test positive for rabies in southwest Nebraska.

In bats and other warm-blooded animals, rabies is a deadly virus that causes swelling of the brain. People may be exposed to rabies from saliva or blood, most commonly through a bite or contact with an infected bat.

“Bat activity usually picks up in the fall when they migrate back to their winter habitats,” explains Melissa Propp RN, Clinic Manager with SWNPHD. “This year we have already started to get more reports of people finding bats in their homes.”

#### **Bat safety**

If you find a bat in your house, use caution. You should always avoid touching them with your bare hands. Bat bites can be very tiny and difficult to see so if you think you have been bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the area with soap and water right away and seek medical attention. If you or your family members wake up with a bat in the room where you were sleeping, the bat should be tested for rabies because it can be hard to tell if you had contact with a bat while sleeping.

#### **If you need to capture a bat:**

1. Find a container like a box or jar large enough for the bat to fit in.
2. Find a piece of cardboard large enough to cover the opening of the container.
3. Punch small air holes in the cardboard.
4. Put on leather work gloves.
5. When the bat lands, approach it slowly and put the container over the top of it.
6. Slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
7. Tape the cardboard onto the container to secure the bat inside.
8. Contact your local veterinarian to have the bat tested for rabies.

#### **If you have bats roosting in your house:**

1. At dusk, go outside and watch to see where they are exiting the house.
2. Loosely hang bird netting or plastic sheeting over the exit hole(s). This allows bats to exit but keeps them from returning.
3. Once all the bats have exited, seal the opening(s).

#### **Prevent bats from getting into your house:**

1. Check for any openings that bats could use to get inside. Bats can fit through very small openings, as small as the end of your pinkie finger (a quarter of an inch).
2. Use caulk to seal any openings larger than a dime.

3. Use screens, chimney caps, and draft guards to seal attic doors.
4. Be sure to fill any electrical and plumbing holes with steel wool or caulk.
5. Ensure all doors and windows close tightly. Try to keep doors closed during evening hours and use screens on all open doors and windows.

“If you have questions about bats or rabies, you can always contact SWNPHD regarding rabies vaccination, testing, and exposures,” continues Propp.

For more information contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223 or [info@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:info@swhealth.ne.gov). Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram or view the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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