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For Immediate Release

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Bat found in McDonough County home tests positive for rabies

Macomb, IL—The McDonough County Health Department is announcing that a bat found in a McDonough County home on June 3, 2024, tested positive for rabies.

The bat was collected and subsequently tested at the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) laboratory after a Macomb resident reported a possible exposure with both a family pet and household member.

In Illinois, bats are the primary carrier of rabies. Rabies is a fatal disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system and can only be confirmed by laboratory testing. Rabies is a medical urgency but not an emergency. Once exposure to rabies is identified, the administration of PEP should not be delayed. PEP is the treatment provided after a rabies exposure and consists of a dose of human rabies immunoglobulin (RIG) and several doses of rabies vaccine over a 14-day period to prevent rabies infection.

The best way to avoid rabies is to avoid exposure and take preventative steps. MCHD reminds residents to take the following steps to prevent exposure to bats in and outside of the home:

- Make sure doors, windows, and vents have screens that are securely framed and free of holes, chimneys are capped and gaps around utility lines are plugged.
- Do not touch, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse sick, wild animals to health.
- Rabies vaccinations are required for both cats and dogs in Illinois. Be a responsible pet owner and make sure your pets are up to date with their vaccinations.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

McDonough County residents who find a bat in their home and come into contact with it or were in the same room as the animal while sleeping should contact MCHD for guidance regarding exposure, testing and next steps. Residents should take care to not have direct contact with a bat, live or dead. Residents should use a shovel or plastic bags to collect a bat for testing. Bats must be in good condition (i.e. head is intact) and recently diseased in order to be submitted for testing.

For more information on rabies, call **the McDonough County Health Department at (309) 837-9951 Monday through Thursday 7:30-5:00pm.**