



Douglas County
Health & Social Services Department
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NEWS RELEASE
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**PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS REMIND THE PUBLIC
TO PROTECT AGAINST RABIES**

The Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Lab has recently reported that bats in Jackson, Benton, and Umatilla Counties have tested positive for rabies. Douglas County Public Health would like to remind the public to stay away from bats that may be sick, flopping around, or acting "unbat-like."

"People can do two things to protect themselves and their pets from rabies. Never handle bats, and make sure your cats and dogs are up to date on their rabies vaccines," said Terry Westfall, Environmental Specialist with Douglas County Environmental Health. Cats are naturally attracted to bats and their contact may lead to a rabies exposure. Nationally, twice as many cats as dogs are reported to have rabies each year.

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system and is caused by exposure to a rabid animal. Exposure is usually through a bite, but can also occur through scratches and saliva contact with broken skin. It is almost always fatal once symptoms begin.

Bats normally bite in self-defense, but pose little danger to people who do not handle them. If you find a bat during daylight hours, it is most likely unhealthy and should be avoided.

"Any exposure to bats should be taken seriously – whether you're bitten or find a bat in your home that you didn't see enter," said Westfall. To report animal bites or exposure to bats, call Douglas County Environmental Health at 440-3569 or Douglas County Animal Control at 440-4328. For more information, call Douglas County Environmental Health at 440-3569 or visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.

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