

# Bat in Woodland Park tests positive for Rabies

August 22, 2019

Teller County, CO – A bat has tested positive for rabies in Woodland Park, Colorado according to Teller County Public Health & Environment. A property owner found the bat lying on a deck in the late afternoon and reported it to authorities. The bat was taken to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Laboratory and on August 20, 2019, it tested positive for rabies. There are no known human exposures.

Public Health is urging residents to protect themselves by never touching or feeding wild or stray animals, and keeping pets up to date on rabies vaccination. Rabies is almost always fatal in humans if exposed by a bite or scratch from a rabid animal, and not treated.

“Rabies is endemic on the front range of Colorado in bats and skunks, that is why we always encourage pet owners to vaccinate all domestic animals including dogs, cats, horses and livestock that may come in contact with wild animals,” said Jacqueline Revello, Director of Teller County Public Health & Environment.

Rabies is fatal once symptoms appear. Never feed or touch stray or wild animals, and keep pets and livestock rabies vaccinations up to date through a licensed veterinarian. Feeding wild animals makes them less afraid of people and brings large numbers of animals into small areas.

This increases the risk of transmission of disease to humans and pets. Unvaccinated pets or livestock are at risk of infection, which also puts owners or family members at risk.

Preventive vaccination is available for people known or suspected to have been bitten by a rabid animal. It is important for people bitten or scratched by an unfamiliar animal to contact their doctor immediately.

## Take these precautions to prevent rabies:

- **Vaccinate your pets** against rabies by using a licensed veterinarian. Rabies shots need to be boosted, so check your pet’s records or talk to your veterinarian.
- **When walking or hiking with your dog**, protect them and wildlife by keeping your dog on a leash.
- **Keep cats and other pets inside** at night to reduce the risk of exposure to other domestic animals and wildlife. Keep dogs within your sight (in a fenced yard, or on leash) during the day while outside.

- **Contact your veterinarian** immediately if you believe your pet has been exposed to a wild animal.
- **Do not touch or feed wild animals.** Wild animals like skunks and foxes adapt to residential environments if food is available – please don't leave pet food outdoors.
- **If you or a family member is bitten or scratched** by a wild or unknown animal, seek medical care.
- **If you encounter a lost or stray dog or cat**, contact the Teller County Animal Control 719-687-9652
- **Contact an animal or pest control company** for assistance with “bat-proofing” your home.

#### **How to recognize sick wildlife:**

- Healthy wild animals are normally afraid of humans.
- Sick animals often do not run away when spotted by people.
- Wildlife suffering from rabies will often act aggressively and violently approach people or pets.
- However, sometimes rabid animals are overly quiet and passive and want to hide. If they are hiding, leave them alone. Rabid wildlife might also stumble or have trouble walking.
- Report sick or diseased animals to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife at (719) 227-5218.

Rabies is a viral disease that infects the brain and other parts of the central nervous system, causing brain swelling and damage, and ultimately, death. Rabies is spread primarily through the bite of rabid animals, resulting in the spread of the disease through their infected saliva. Rabies also can be spread when saliva from an infected animal gets into open wounds, cuts or enters through membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth.