



For Immediate Release

Date: April 6, 2009  
Contact: Leslie Piotrowski  
847-377-8055  
Tiffany Bronk  
847-377-8099

### **First Rabid Bat Found in Lake County in 2009**

The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is urging Lake County residents to avoid contact with bats. A bat, found in a Gurnee yard on March 26, has tested positive for rabies. There was no human or pet contact with the bat. This is the first bat that tested positive for rabies in Lake County this year.

Last year, nine bats tested positive. In total, over 200 Lake County bats were submitted to the state laboratory for testing in 2008. Four percent of those bats tested positive, which remained in line with the statewide prevalence of 3.8 percent of bats testing positive in 2008. In Lake County, bats are the only animals that have tested positive for rabies for over 20 years.

Rabies is an almost always fatal disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. However, this disease is fully preventable with prophylaxis. Most commonly, people get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal. In other cases, people can contract rabies if any infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, comes in contact with one's nose, mouth, an open wound or gets directly into the eyes.

The Health Department is urging anyone who has direct contact with a bat or notices a bat acting in an unusual manner, such as flying in daylight or lying on the ground or in your home, to contact the Health Department at (847) 949-9925. If the bat is inside of your house, do not chase it away because it may be needed for rabies testing.

Close the doors and keep people away from the room where the bat is located. Trained animal wardens will remove the bat at no cost to the resident or refer the caller to the appropriate jurisdiction. Health officials are urging residents to avoid touching, hitting or destroying bats. When dead bats are submitted to state labs for rabies testing, they need to be undamaged.

Parents should make sure children know that they should never touch a bat that is lying on the ground. The bat may not be dead, just ill, and could bite. Pet owners should be on the alert for bats near their homes, because pets that spend time outdoors can easily come into contact with these animals. If a rabid animal bites a pet, the pet may, in turn, bite a

person, transmitting rabies to that individual. Rabies can be avoided in pets by vaccination, which is why a rabies vaccination is required for dogs and cats.

The Health Department can also refer callers to bat exclusion companies and provide information on methods for excluding bats. Bats can be excluded from living quarters by covering chimneys and vents with half-inch hardware cloth screens, by installing draft guards beneath doors, and by sealing any other possible access routes, especially around screen doors, windows and plumbing. Bats potentially can enter holes as small as 3/4" in diameter. They do not chew insulation or otherwise make new holes. These potential entries must be covered or plugged. For small crevices, silicone caulking may help. If a large bat colony must be evicted from a wall or attic, careful observations should be made at dusk to find entry holes (also sometimes recognizable by stains around used holes or crevices or by droppings beneath). The holes should be plugged after the bats emerge to feed (which they do during evening hours).

While bats can transmit rabies, they are also beneficial animals. Some species can eat up to 600 insects in an hour. Besides mosquitoes, bats eat crop-destroying pests, like moths, beetles and grasshoppers.

###