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TO: DeKalb County News Media

FROM: DeKalb County Health Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Department Reports Bat Positive for Rabies

DeKalb County Health Department confirms that a second bat for 2021 tested positive for rabies on October 9th. The bat was found in Sycamore and had contact with a vaccinated dog. The dog will receive a booster and be monitored at home.

Bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Illinois. A bat that is active during the day, found on the ground and unable to fly, may be rabid, however you cannot tell by looking at a bat if it is rabid. The animal does not have to be aggressive or exhibit other symptoms to have rabies. If you are able to do so without putting yourself at risk for physical contact or being bitten, try to cover the bat with a large can or bucket, and close the door to the room.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Humans can get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal. Rabies can also be contracted when saliva from a rabid animal gets directly into the eyes, nose, mouth or a wound. Without preventive treatment, rabies is a fatal disease. If you have been bitten or exposed to a bat, seek immediate medical attention. Bat bites may not be felt while sleeping, and special consideration also needs to be taken when a bat is found in a child's room or in a disabled person's living area. Preventive treatment with rabies immune globulin and a vaccine series must begin immediately.

The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Be a responsible pet owner. Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all pets (indoor/outdoor).
- If a bat is in your home, **do not release the bat outdoors** until after speaking with animal control or public health officials.
- Seek immediate veterinary assistance if your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat.
- Do not handle, feed or 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 animals to health. Call animal control or an animal rescue agency for assistance.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good principle for children to learn to reduce the risk of exposures to rabid animals.
- Maintain homes and other buildings so bats cannot gain entry
- All animal bites to humans that occur in DeKalb County must be reported to: **DeKalb County Animal Control at (815) 748-2427.**

