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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SAGINAW COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ENCOURAGES RABIES PREVENTION**

The Saginaw County Department of Public Health (SCDPH) officials are reminding residents that bats become active during this time of year, which means the possibility of exposure to rabies is increasing.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system in humans and other mammals. A person may contract rabies through a bite, scratch, or saliva from an infected animal. A bat bite or scratch may not be seen or even felt by the injured person due to the small size of its teeth and claws. A potential rabies exposure should never be taken lightly. If untreated, rabies is fatal.

If you find a bat, dead or alive, in your home, call SCDPH immediately to report the exposure and determine if preventive treatment is needed. If the bat is available for testing and test results are negative, preventive treatment is not needed. Animals do not have to be aggressive or behaving erratically to have rabies. Changes in any animal's normal behavior can be early signs of rabies. Bats that are on the ground, unable to fly, or active during the day are more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often easily approached but should never be handled. Recommendations to help prevent the spread of rabies:

- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with SCDPH. It may be possible to test the bat and avoid the need to receive rabies treatment.
- If you wake to a bat in the room, you may need to be treated if the bat cannot be tested.
- Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats, ferrets, and other animals you own.
- Seek immediate veterinary assistance for your pet if it is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat.
- Call Saginaw County Animal Control about removing stray animals in your

neighborhood.

- Never adopt wild animals, bring them into your home, or try to nurse sick, wild animals to health.
- Do not touch, feed or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- Teach children to never handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Maintain homes and other buildings so bats cannot get inside.

For more information about rabies, please visit

[https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-76711\\_78041---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-76711_78041---,00.html). For

questions about animal exposure, call Saginaw County Animal Control at (989) 797-4500. For questions about human exposure, call SCDPH at (989) 758-3887. Be Wise. Be Well.

**## END ##**