

Current Rabies Shots Save Two Local Pets

Two St. Charles County Pets Exposed to Rabid Bats In Last Two Weeks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Charles County — The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment urges residents to make sure their pets have a current rabies vaccination. In the last two weeks two family pets, one dog in unincorporated St. Charles County and one St. Charles City cat have been exposed to rabies. Both were found carrying bats in their mouth. It is likely that they had been bitten. An analysis of the brains of the bats by the Missouri Department of Health Public Health Laboratory found that they were infected with the rabies virus. Because the owners were conscientious and responsible, and because their pets had the current rabies vaccinations, there is a happy ending to the story.

"The current vaccinations were the difference between life and death for both animals," according to Mr. Gil Copley, the Director of the County's Department of Community Health and the Environment. Copley explained that "had the vaccinations not been current, both pets would have been euthanized, their heads sent to the Missouri Department of Health Public Health

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Laboratory, and the brain tissue examined for the rabies virus. Instead, they were immediately revaccinated and will be observed at home for 45 days."

Rabid bats are found every year in Missouri. According to the Missouri Department of Health, as of the week ending August 11, 2001 a total of 22 animals have been confirmed with rabies this year in Missouri. Fifteen of those cases were in bats. As of August 11, four of those bats had been identified with rabies in St. Louis County and two in St. Louis City. Since that report, two bats have been reported from St. Charles County and an additional four bats from St. Louis County. Skunks and raccoons also have been found with rabies with increasing frequency in the United States. Although no raccoons have been found with rabies in Missouri to date in 2001, four skunks identified in four south and southwestern Missouri counties have been infected with rabies.

Cases of human rabies are rare but do occur almost every year in the United States. Although rabies disease can be prevented after an exposure to a rabid animal with treatment and a series of shots, once the disease develops it always leads to death. Because of this, people are urged never to touch bats or other wild animals and to immediately report any such contact to their health care provider.

For information or to seek assistance in dealing with a bat, contact the animal control agency in your area. Animal control programs in St. Charles County can be reached at the following numbers:

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- **636-949-7387** St. Charles County Division of Humane Services (Pet Adoption Center) or **636-949-0809** County Sheriff's Department after hours
- **636-949-2295** St. Charles City Animal Control or **636-949-3300** St. Charles City Police Department after hours
- **636-949-7354** St. Peters Animal Control or **636-278-2222** St. Peters Police Department after hours
- **636-240-3200** (all hours) O'Fallon Animal Control
- **636-327-5105** (all hours) Wentzville Animal Control

For further information on bats and rabies, citizens can visit the CDC Rabies Program web page at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies> or go to the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment website at www.scchealth.org and select the scrolling link to the CDC Program. Residents can also call the Department of Community Health and the Environment at 636-949-7400 for additional information.

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