



KANE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
MEDIA ADVISORY

August 28, 2007
Contact: Tom Schlueter (630) 444-3098
(630) 417-9729 cell

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**FOURTH BAT DETERMINED TO BE POSITIVE FOR RABIES
IN KANE COUNTY**

The Kane County Health Department and City of Aurora announced today that another bat found at a residence in Aurora has tested positive for rabies. This is the fourth bat found in Kane County this year that has tested positive; three from Aurora and one from Elgin.

The number of bat rabies cases is on the rise throughout Illinois. As of Aug 22nd, Illinois has recorded 68 confirmed cases of rabies in animals this year, all found in bats. During 2006 one bat was found in Kane County with rabies in the county, the first since 2001. Surrounding counties also have seen increases. This year McHenry County has had nine, Lake six, Cook 17, Will 5.

Bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Illinois. “Rabid bats are clearly becoming a problem this year throughout our region,” commented Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner. “Citizens need to be aware of the steps they can take to prevent being bit by a bat.”

“Once again we want to take the opportunity to remind the public of the importance of taking measures to prevent exposures to bats and other potentially rabid animals. Additionally, we urge individuals to report exposures to your health care provider or health department,” said Gerald Jones, Chairman of the Kane County Board’s Public Health Committee.

The latest case involves a family of four living in Aurora who discovered a bat in the room they were sleeping in. The county’s first case of the year involved a bat found in a home in Elgin in July. The county’s second case of the year involved a 61-year-old female Aurora resident who was bitten by the bat while trying to remove it. The county’s third case involved a 62-year-old female Aurora resident who awoke to find the bat in her bedroom. In all cases the residents will receive post-exposure prophylaxis, a series of five shots administered over 28 days. A bat found in a room with a person who is asleep or in a room with a child or individual who is awake but can not clearly communicate if a bat had physical contact with them is assumed to have bitten the individual. It is not safe to rely on finding visible signs of a bite as the teeth of a bat are tiny and razor sharp.

More information is available by calling Kane County Animal at (630) 232-3555 or Aurora Animal Control at (630) 897-5695.

The following tips can help prevent the spread of rabies:

- Report the following to your healthcare provider or local health department for evaluation to determine if post exposure prophylaxis is indicated:
 - All animal bites
 - Live bat found in room with a sleeping person
 - Live bat found in a room with a small child or other person who cannot clearly indicate whether a bite or saliva exposure may have taken place
 - Presence of bat saliva in a mucus membrane or skin abrasion
 - Physical contact with a bat without heavy gloves where either a bat bite or bat saliva entering a mucus membrane or skin abrasion cannot be ruled out
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools and other similar areas where they might come in contact with people or pets. Information about excluding bats may be found at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcbats.htm>
- Avoid direct contact with unfamiliar animals. Do not handle, feed or unintentionally 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.
- Be a responsible pet owner. Keep vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs, cats and ferrets. This requirement is important to not only keep your pets from getting rabies, but also to provide a barrier of protection for you if your animal is bitten by a rabid animal.
- Keep pets under direct supervision so they do not come in contact with wild animals. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal or exposed to a bat, seek veterinary assistance for your pet immediately.
- Call the local animal control agency to remove contained stray animals in your neighborhood.

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Humans get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal or if infectious material from a rabid animal, such as saliva, gets directly into their eyes, nose, mouth or a wound. Without preventive treatment, rabies is a fatal disease.

Any wild mammal such as a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote or bat, can have rabies and transmit it to humans. It is not possible from looking at an animal to tell whether it is rabid. The animal does not have to be foaming at the mouth or be exhibiting other symptoms to have rabies.

Changes in any animal’s normal behavior such as difficulty with walking, or just an overall appearance of illness, can be early signs of rabies. For example, skunks, which normally are nocturnal and avoid contact with people, may appear friendly or ill and may approach humans during daylight hours.

A bat that is active during the day, found in a place where bats are not usually seen (such as in a home or on the lawn), or is unable to fly is more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often easily approached but should never be handled.

More information about rabies is available by logging on to the IDPH Web site at www.idph.state.il.us/health/infect/reportdis/rabies.htm.

###

Tom Schlueter
Public Information Officer
Kane County Health Department
1240 North Highland Ave. Suite 25
Aurora, IL 60506
630-444-3098 direct
630-417-9729 cell