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## **Pet vaccination is key to rabies prevention**

With the summer months upon us, the City of Evanston Health and Human Services would like to remind our community about the importance of the preventative measures they can take to protect themselves and their pets against rabies.

To date, there have been no positive cases in Evanston. However, the Kane County Health Department is reporting that two bats have tested positive for rabies so far this year. One was found in Elgin, the other one in Dundee.

According to Evonda Thomas, Director of Evanston Health and Human Services, the most significant measure people can take is to ensure that their pet's vaccinations are up to date. Not only does the vaccine protect the pet, it also serves as barrier of protection for people. Because many of the positive bats are discovered indoors, it is important to vaccinate pets even if they never venture out of doors.

The state of Illinois recorded 113 confirmed cases of rabies in animals last year, all found in bats. Bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Illinois. A case of human rabies has not been reported in Illinois since 1954.

Other prevention guidelines include:

- Rabid bats may exhibit no obvious abnormalities, so all contact with bats should be avoided.
- Where there is a likelihood of encountering bats, such as at children's outdoor camps, people should be instructed not to touch bats.
- People should NOT be allowed to occupy a room in which bats are found, until it is certain that no bats remain in the room and that the room has been sealed to prevent their re-entry.
- If a bat is found indoors, the structure should be thoroughly inspected for the presence of roosting bats.
- Exclusion remains the best way to prevent and control bats in a structure.
- 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 law enforcement or animal control agency for direction as to whom to contact for the remove of contained stray animals in your neighborhood.

For more information go to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> or call the Evanston Health and Human Services Department at 847-866-2962.

Exclusion remains the best way to prevent and control bats in a structure. Information about exclusion can be found by logging on to the Illinois Department of Public Health Web site at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcbats.htm>.