



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 14, 2026

Health Officials Promote Rabies Awareness after County Numbers Increase

The Clinton County Health District (CCHD) is providing updates and education about rabies monitoring for Clinton County. In April, a bat was confirmed positive from the Sabina area, and in July a bat was confirmed positive from the Midland area. "There is no need for alarm, the overall risk to the public remains low," stated Katie Burwinkel, Environmental Health Director. "These cases serve as an important reminder to take precautions around wild and stray animals and to ensure pets are protected through routine rabies vaccination".

Rabies is a virus that affects the brain and nervous system of mammals, including humans. The virus is almost always fatal once symptoms develop, but it is 100% preventable when exposure is recognized early and appropriate medical treatment is received promptly.

Rabies is spread through the saliva or nervous tissue of an infected animal, most commonly through bites. It can also be transmitted if saliva from a rabid animal comes into contact with an open wound or the eyes, nose, or mouth.

In Ohio, the animals most found to carry rabies include bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Domestic animals such as dogs, cats, and livestock can also become infected if they are exposed to rabid wildlife and are not vaccinated.

Animals infected with rabies may exhibit a variety of unusual behaviors, including aggression or unusually tame behavior, difficulty walking or loss of coordination, excessive drooling or foaming at the mouth, and unusual daytime activity in nocturnal animals. Not every rabid animal will show all of these signs. Residents should never attempt to handle wildlife or unfamiliar animals that appear sick or are behaving abnormally.

Rabies testing is recommended when a suspected rabid animal has potentially exposed a person or domestic animal through a bite that breaks the skin, a scratch contaminated with saliva, or saliva or nervous tissue contacting an open wound or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth). Simple contact, like petting the animal, being nearby, or touching its blood, urine, feces, or skunk spray, does not count as exposure. Bats are an exception, as direct physical contact with a bat is an exposure, when a bite cannot be ruled out. Examples include a person sleeping then waking up and finding a bat in the room, a bat being found in a room with a young child, someone unable to reliably report whether contact occurred, or a dog or cat has physical contact with a bat or another wild mammal suspected of having rabies.

If possible, the suspected rabid animal should be safely contained without damaging the head and





Clinton County Health District

Public Health - Prevent. Promote. Protect.

111 S. Nelson Ave. Suite 1

Wilmington, Ohio 45177

info@clincohd.com

937.382.3829

reported immediately to the local health department or animal control. Do not release the animal if rabies testing may be necessary.

Rabies testing can only be performed on deceased animals by specialized public health laboratories because testing requires examination of brain tissue.

If you are bitten or scratched by an animal, wash the wound immediately with soap and running water, seek medical attention as soon as possible, and report the incident to the local health department. Prompt evaluation allows healthcare providers to determine whether rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is needed.

Residents can reduce the risk of rabies by keeping pets current on rabies vaccinations, supervising pets outdoors, avoiding contact with wildlife, especially animals exhibiting unusual behavior, not feeding or handling wild animals, securing garbage and removing food sources that attract wildlife, and teaching children never to touch unfamiliar animals, even if they appear friendly.

Bats are an important part of Ohio's ecosystems. They consume thousands of insects each night, including mosquitoes and agricultural pests, making them valuable natural pest controllers.

Several bat species in Ohio have experienced significant population declines due to habitat loss and White-nose Syndrome. Because of these declines, Ohio bat species receive state and federal protections.

Residents should remember never to kill or harm bats intentionally unless there is a bite or potential exposure to rabies. If a bat is found inside your home and there has been no possible exposure, allow it to leave if it can do so safely, or contact a licensed wildlife professional for assistance. Bat exclusion from homes and buildings should be performed in accordance with Ohio law. Contact the Ohio Department of Natural Resources at 1-800-WILDLIFE for additional information. Seal openings around homes after bats have safely exited to prevent future entry.

Protecting bat populations while responding appropriately to potential rabies exposures helps preserve Ohio's wildlife and safeguards public health.

The recent positive rabies cases are a reminder that rabies continues to exist in wildlife throughout Ohio. By avoiding contact with wild animals, vaccinating pets, and promptly reporting potential exposures, residents can help protect themselves, their families, and their communities. If you have questions about a potential rabies exposure or need guidance following contact with a wild or domestic animal, contact the Clinton County Health District. Seek medical care immediately if you believe you have been exposed to rabies.



Equal Opportunity Employer/Provider



Clinton County Health District

Public Health - Prevent. Promote. Protect.

111 S. Nelson Ave. Suite 1
Wilmington, Ohio 45177
info@clincohd.com
937.382.3829

###

Media Contact:

Tonja Ruther, Special Projects Coordinator
Truther@clincohd.com



Equal Opportunity Employer/Provider