



Cowlitz County Health and Human Services

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 22, 2025

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Release #25-008

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies in Cowlitz County

A bat found by a Cowlitz County resident on their property has tested positive for rabies. Cowlitz County Health & Human Service (CCHHS) continues working with the family to ensure anyone with potential exposure receives appropriate treatment if needed and is also investigating whether pet exposure occurred. This is the first bat in Cowlitz County to test positive for rabies since 2019.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) identifies bats as the primary animal that carries rabies in Washington. Rabies is a severe viral disease that affects the central nervous system, and it is almost always fatal.

According to the County Health Officer, Dr. Steven Krager, people can get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal. Rabies can also be contracted when saliva from a rabid animal gets directly into a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound. People may not know when they have been bitten by a bat because bats have very small teeth and the bite mark may not be easy to see.

If you find yourself in close proximity to a bat in your home and are not sure if you were exposed, for example – you wake up and find a bat in your bedroom, do not release the bat before calling your healthcare provider and CCHHS at 360-414-5599 to determine the potential for rabies exposure, the need for treatment, and to decide whether or not to test the animal for rabies.

You can reduce the risk of rabies exposure by following these simple precautions:

1. If you believe you have been bitten by an animal that may have rabies, clean the site with soap and water and contact your healthcare provider and CCHHS at 360-414-5599.
2. Teach your children [never to touch or handle bats](#), even dead ones. Have your children tell an adult if they find a bat at home, at school, or with a pet.

3. Keep bats out of your living space by “[bat proofing](#)” your home; including screening windows and doors if left open, closing chimney dampers when not in use, and sealing any gaps in doors.
4. Pets may get rabies if bitten by a rabid animal. Protect them by getting them vaccinated routinely. [Dogs, cats, and ferrets are required to be vaccinated](#) in Washington State. Consult your veterinarian for vaccine recommendations.
5. Links to these resources and more are available on the CCHHS website:
www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/rabies

To contact Health & Human Services, please call 360-414-5599.

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