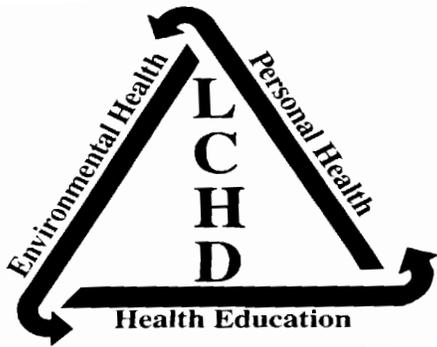


## **MEDIA RELEASE**



Date: September 26, 2019  
To: All Media  
From: LaSalle County Health Department  
717 Etna Road  
Ottawa, IL 61350  
Contact: Jenny Barrie (ext. 74315)  
Leslie Dougherty (ext. 74314)  
LaSalle County Animal Control 815-434-8661  
Phone: (815) 433-3366  
**For Immediate Release**

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### **“World Rabies Day”**

**OTTAWA, IL** – World Rabies Day is September 28, 2019. Established in 2007, it aims to raise awareness about rabies and help the world come together to fight the preventable disease. The theme for 2019 is “Rabies: Vaccinate to Eliminate,” which focuses on the foundation of all rabies control efforts. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), “in the United States, rabies deaths are very rare thanks to successful animal control and vaccination programs. But around the world, rabies kills more than 59,000 people every year. The most affected countries are in Africa and Asia, and almost half of the victims are children under the age of 15.”

The good news is that rabies can be prevented through vaccination of both animals and people. Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals. Humans can get rabies after being bitten by an infected animal. Rabies can also be contracted when saliva from a rabid animal gets directly into the eyes, nose, mouth or a wound. Without preventive treatment, rabies is a fatal disease. If you have been bitten or exposed to a bat, seek immediate medical attention. Bat bites may not be felt while sleeping, and special consideration also needs to be taken when a bat is found in a child’s room or in a disabled person’s living area. Rabies treatment should be considered and the local health department should be contacted immediately to determine if treatment is necessary.

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Whether you are a pet owner, a parent, or an outdoor enthusiast, there are steps you can take to keep yourself and your family free from rabies throughout the year. Here are some tips to protect yourself and others from rabies:

### **1. Take Pets to a Veterinarian for Their Rabies Shot**

A veterinarian can make sure your pets – like dogs, cats, and ferrets – are up to date on their rabies shot and protected from getting rabies. All dogs and cats should be vaccinated around four months of age, and then again one year later. After these two shots, your veterinarian will develop a vaccination plan that is best for your pet and complies with local laws. This is important, since animals that have not received a rabies shot and are in contact with potentially rabid wild animals may need to be quarantined or euthanized.

### **2. Protect Your Family Around the Home**

There are things you can do around the home to help reduce the risk of rabies to you and your pets.

- Keep your pets indoors. When you let your dog or cat go outside, it's best to have a fenced-in yard and make sure someone is there to watch it and keep it safe. Use a leash when walking your dog.
- Keep your pets' food in a place where only your pets have access to it and keep garbage securely covered. These items may attract wild animals or stray animals to your yard.
- Understand the risk from bats. While most wild animals are found primarily outdoors, bats can sometimes fly into buildings. This includes your home and even the room where you sleep.
- Indoor-only cats do occasionally develop rabies because of bats in the home. It is important to keep all cats up to date on rabies vaccination, even if they never leave your home.
- If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with animal control or public health officials. If you are able to do so without putting yourself at risk for physical (more) contact or being bitten, try to cover the bat with a large can or bucket, and close the door to the room.

### **3. Keep Away From Wildlife and Unfamiliar Animals**

In the United States, rabies is most often seen in wild animals such as raccoons, bats, skunks and foxes. One of the best ways to protect yourself and your family is to avoid contact with wild animals. Do not feed or handle them, even if they seem friendly. You should also avoid dogs and cats that are unfamiliar to you and your family. These animals may be in contact with wildlife and can also spread rabies to humans.

If you see an animal acting strangely, report it to animal control. Some things to look for are:

- General sickness
- Problems swallowing
- Lots of drool or saliva
- An animal that appears more tame than you would expect

**-more-**

- An animal that bites at everything
- An animal that's having trouble moving or may even be paralyzed

Never pick up or touch dead animals. The rabies virus may still be present in the saliva or nervous tissue, especially if they have only been dead for a short time. If you see a dead animal, call animal control. If a bat is in your home, do not release the bat outdoors until after speaking with animal control or public health officials.

For further questions and additional information, please contact the LaSalle County Health Department at 815-433-3366 or visit our website at [www.lasallecounty.org](http://www.lasallecounty.org). Information about rabies activity in Illinois can be found at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/rabies>

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