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NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rabies Alert and Bats Awareness Tips

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Genesee Orleans County Health Departments (GCHD/OCHD) uses 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons.

Health Alerts convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from New York health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

Health Advisories provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

Health Guidance contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by GCHD/OCHD.

Health Updates provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

Rabies is a deadly but 100% preventable viral disease of mammals that is most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The rabies virus attacks the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord), ultimately causing disease in the brain and death.

Each year, the vast majority of rabies cases reported occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats and foxes. "It is very important to get your pets vaccinated and not to touch or handle any stray or wild animals including baby animals and bats," stated Paul Pettit, Director of Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health). "Remember not to touch animals out in public as they may be scared and bite or scratch out of fear."

Bats can occasionally find their way into houses, which most often occurs during the summer nights. What should you do when you find a bat in your home? It is extremely important to safely capture the suspected animal if it has or may have been in contact with people, pets or livestock so it can be tested for rabies. If the bat cannot be captured, you should call the health department for advice and next steps. If you are certain that the bat did not come in contact with a person or pet, close the room and closet doors, open the windows and watch the bat until it leaves your house.

In some situations, it is possible that a bat bite could go undetected. For example, when a bat is found in a room with a sleeping person or a bat is found next to an unattended young child.

"Healthy People in a Healthy Community"

“If the bat is available for testing and the test results are negative, post exposure treatment will not be needed,” stated Pettit. Rabies post exposure prophylaxis is recommended for all persons with a bite, scratch or mucus membrane exposure to a bat, unless the bat is available for testing and is negative for evidence of rabies.

To safely capture a bat:

- Turn on room lights and close all the windows.
- Close the room and closet doors.
- Wait for the bat to land.
- While wearing thick leather-like gloves, place a coffee can, pail or similar container over the bat (Never handle a bat with your bare hands).
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat.
- Firmly hold the cardboard in place against the top of the container, turn it right side up and tape the cardboard tightly to the container.

By avoiding contact with stray or wild animals, saving the bat or animal that may have had contact with humans or domestic animals, and reporting an incident to your local Health Department, we may be able to avoid unnecessary medical treatment that averages over \$3,000.00 per person. As a pet owner, if you see your pet bite someone or know that your pet bit someone, please report it to the health department so we can get rabies verification. This will help avoid unnecessary medical treatment for the victim.

Please take note of our upcoming FREE drive thru anti-rabies immunization clinics for dogs, cats and ferrets in Genesee and Orleans Counties.

Orleans County: Orleans County Fairgrounds (12690 RT. 31, Albion, NY)

- October 2, 2021 from 9:00-11:30AM

Genesee County: Genesee County Fairgrounds (5056 East Main Street, Batavia, NY)

- September 16, 2021 from 4:00-7:00PM
- October 14, 2021 from 4:00-7:00PM