



# Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

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MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Health Department Reminds Residents of Increased Bat Activity**

(Mason City) – The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health would like to remind residents that bat activity increases throughout our county this time of year. This increase in activity creates more interaction between humans and bats. Bats can be associated with rabies, so the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health is encouraging residents to follow safety precautions when dealing with bats.

Rabies is a deadly disease of the central nervous system, eventually causing disease in the brain and death. In humans, rabies is 100% fatal, but also 100% preventable if treated appropriately.

Rabies is spread when the virus from an infected animal's saliva enters the body through the person's skin, most likely as a result of a bite from the infected animal or contact with wounds or mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose, and mouth. The virus can also be spread through contact with the infected animals brain or spinal cord tissue.

It is not always possible to visibly detect a bat bite so if a person is in a room with a bat and they are unable to say, "I have not been bitten", they may have been exposed to rabies. This includes finding a bat in a room with anyone who is or was sleeping, unattended children, an intoxicated person, or someone who is not physically or mentally capable of reporting that they have not been bitten.

If you feel that you or someone in your household may have had an exposure to rabies, wash the bite or wound thoroughly with soap and water and contact your healthcare provider to determine if post exposure prophylactic treatment is necessary. If possible, the bat should be captured without damaging the animal so it can be submitted for rabies testing. Residents should contact their local health department for instructions on how to submit the bat for testing.

The best way to reduce human exposure to rabies is to ensure vaccination of all pets and avoiding contact with all wild animals.

If you have additional questions about bats and or rabies, please visit our web site at [www.cghealth.com](http://www.cghealth.com) or call (641) 421-9300.

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