

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 08/09/2016**

TO: Grant County Healthcare Providers  
Grant County Veterinarians  
Grant County Media

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

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## **Grant County Bat Tests Positive for Rabies**

**Bat submitted for rabies testing after biting a local resident.**

Moses Lake, WA— On August 8<sup>th</sup> a bat from Grant County was submitted to the Washington State Public Health Laboratory for rabies testing after biting a local resident. The bat tested positive for rabies. The rabid bat was collected from the residence of the bite victim in the Moses Lake area by GCHD staff. The bite occurred after the bat was accidentally disturbed from underneath a boat cover. A quick internet search by the family instructed them to capture the bat and contact local public health for rabies testing. The bite victim is currently receiving the anti-rabies vaccine series and is doing well. No other individuals were exposed to the bat.

Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, had this to say about the family's response to the incident: "The steps taken by the family were exemplary and allowed for a timely testing and treatment administration. We very much appreciate their cooperation."

This is the first rabid bat identified in Grant County in over 15 years. In the wild, less than 1% of bats have rabies. Rabid bats have also been identified in Chelan and Spokane Counties this year. The last two cases of human rabies identified in Washington were in 1995 and 1997. Within the last 25 years, 4 domestic animals in Washington have been diagnosed with rabies. **All cats, dogs and ferrets in Washington must be vaccinated against rabies.**

It is **extremely important to never touch a bat**; however, this incident is an opportunity to educate our community about what to do when a bat encounter does occur.

### **What is considered a bat encounter?**

- A bite, scratch, or saliva in your eyes, nose, mouth or fresh wound.
- Finding a bat in the same room of a person who might be unaware that a bite or direct contact occurred (i.e.: a person sleeping or unattended child).

### **What should I do if I have an encounter with a bat?**

- If you have been bitten, immediately wash the bite site with plenty of soap and lots of running warm water for a minimum of 10 minutes then seek immediate medical attention.
- Report the encounter to GCHD (509) 766-7960 ext 0 or (509) 398-2083 (after hours).
- If possible, catch the bat safely, avoiding direct contact. Use heavy leather gloves, a net, and tongs. Put it in a can or a bucket and tightly cover it with a lid. Do not damage the head of the bat because



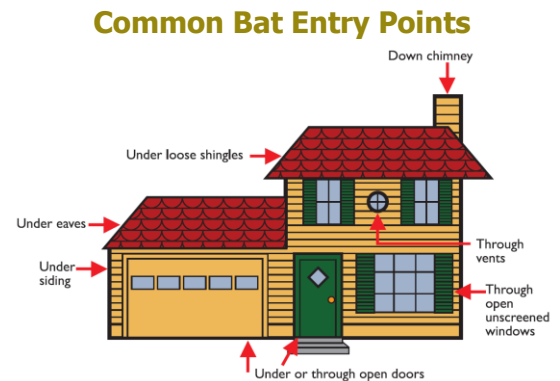
the brain is needed for testing. GCHD staff will make arrangements with you to collect and send the bat off for rabies testing.

- Bats should be captured **only** if there has been direct contact with a person or pet, or if the bat was found in the room of someone who might have been bitten. Once these bats are captured, they should be tested for rabies infection. **Do not release a live bat or throw out a dead bat that has** bitten or scratched, or has had direct contact with a person, unless GCHD staff have instructed you to do so.

### Keep Bats out of your house!

**Bats must not be allowed into your home.** It's best to contact animal-control or wildlife conservation agency for assistance with "bat-proofing" your home. If you choose to "bat-proof" your house yourself, here are some suggestions.

- Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats entry into your living quarters.
- Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics, fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking, and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.
- Prevent bats from roosting in attics or buildings by covering outside entry points.
- More information on "Bat Proofing" can be found [here](#).



More information on bat exposures, what to do if you find a bat your home or cabin, what to do if you are bitten by a bat and how to avoid exposure to rabies can be found at:

[Bat exposure fact sheet- English](#)

[Bat exposure fact sheet- Spanish](#)

### Additional information about Rabies

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention- Rabies](#)

[Washington State Department of Health- Rabies](#)

[Grant County Health District- Bats, Animal Bites & Rabies](#)

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