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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Bat tests positive for rabies in Essex County*

**Elizabethtown, NY.** A bat captured at a residence in Westport has tested positive for rabies. The Essex County Health Department accepted the specimen for preparation and shipment to NYSDOH Wadsworth Laboratory on August 14, 2025. The lab called this afternoon, Friday, August 15, confirming the bat tested positive for the virus.

“Based on the risk bats pose and the circumstances of this incident, one person was advised to seek medical care,” states Director of Health Planning and Promotion for ECHD, Jessica Darney Buehler. “In 2025, rabies cases have been confirmed in four other terrestrial animals, and now one bat. This is the first bat to return positive out of the 34 bats submitted for testing so far this year,” Buehler noted.

If you find a bat in your home (dead or alive):

- Confine it to the room where it was discovered and wait for it to land.
- Wearing gloves, cover the bat with a container.
- Slide a lid or a piece of cardboard under the container and secure with tape to prevent escape.
- Never release a bat found in a home or camp if it was present where people were sleeping, or if it was in a room with anyone who cannot describe the nature and extent of their exposure, such as a young child or incapacitated adult.
- Call ECHD immediately 518-873-3500 for further instructions, even if the bat escapes or cannot be located.

“While most bats do not have rabies, this is a reminder that any potential exposure to bats must be evaluated by the health department,” says Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for ECHD. She emphasizes the importance of capturing the bat, if possible. “If a bat has direct contact with a person or pet, if you awaken to or find a bat in a room where you or someone else was sleeping, or if you are unsure of the extent of an exposure, try to catch it so it can be tested. If it tests negative for rabies, post-exposure treatment can be avoided,” adds Beers.

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