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August 25, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First bat tests positive for rabies in Essex County

Elizabethtown, NY. An after-hours call was made to the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) on Wednesday, August 23, 2023 from an Elizabethtown resident about a bat in their home. After consult by ECHD on call staff, direction was provided on how to safely capture the bat and transport it to ECHD for purpose of rabies testing. The specimen was prepared and shipped to NYSDOH Wadsworth Laboratory. Results returned Friday, August 25, 2023 confirmed the bat was positive for rabies.

Director of Health Planning and Promotion for ECHD, Jessica Darney Buehler stated, "Based on the risk bats pose and the circumstances of this incident, two people were advised to seek medical care". "In 2023, rabies cases have been confirmed in 8 other terrestrial animals and now one bat. This is the first bat to return positive out of the 29 bats submitted for testing so far this year," Buehler noted.

Our message on what do to if you find a bat in your home (whether alive or dead):

- Confine it to the room where it was discovered, wait for it to land and place a container over it, slide the top under the container and secure it shut.
- 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 instructions.

"This latest event, the first time rabies has been detected in a bat since 2019 in Essex County, is a reminder that bats can pose a risk for exposure. If a bat had direct contact with a person or pet, OR if you awaken to or find a bat in a room where you or someone else was sleeping, try to catch it so it can be tested," stated Director of Public Health for ECHD, Linda Beers. "If it tests negative for rabies, post-exposure treatment can be avoided," added Beers.

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