



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 4, 2010

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Bobcats and Bats Force Rabies Back into the Spotlight

Recent bobcat attacks and bat exposures remind Arizonans that rabid animals can be found throughout the state. Three bobcats attacked people and pets in three counties in April. The bobcats tested positive for rabies at the Arizona State Public Health Laboratory (ASPHL). One person was vaccinated after exposure to prevent rabies infection and one pet dog had to be put down because it was not vaccinated against rabies.

Also, in the last few weeks, several bats were sent to the state lab for rabies testing. In two cases, students had been playing with bats found on school grounds.

“Students may have picked up the bats, unaware of what they actually were,” said Program Manager Craig Levy, ADHS Vector Borne & Zoonotic Disease. “Bats can look like small fuzzy animals, so children might think it is safe to handle them. It is not!”

It is important to teach children not to pick up or touch a bat or other wild animal, especially if it is on the ground since it might have rabies. For that matter, any wild animal that appears ill or approaches people should be avoided, including wild animals encountered on hiking trails, in campgrounds or in your own backyard.

ADHS worked with other agencies like the Arizona Game & Fish Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create a video to help teachers and school personnel learn about rabies and bats in the school yard. It is available for free on the [AzDHS YouTube channel](#) and DVDs are being prepared for school district offices throughout the state. The video features interviews with state and federal rabies experts and the only person known to have survived rabies encephalitis.

The best way to protect your pet from rabies is to keep all pets current on vaccinations and to obey leash laws. Whenever people or pets come into contact with confirmed or suspected rabid animals, you should contact the local animal control office for assistance. If a pet owner cannot prove vaccination, the pet will either have to be quarantined for six months at the owner’s expense or euthanized.

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