



# Cochise Health & Social Services

Mary Gomez, Director

"Building A Healthier Future"

\*\*\* MEDIA RELEASE \*\*\*

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Bat Bite in Old Bisbee Creates Potential for Rabies Exposure

Cochise Health & Social Services has received a report that a local adult resident was bitten by a bat on Wednesday, June 20, 2012. The incident occurred in a historic building in Old Bisbee during the afternoon hours when the resident attempted to remove the bat from the premises. The subject received medical attention and began post-exposure treatment at a local hospital.

Local Animal Control responded by capturing the bat and sending it to the Arizona State Laboratory for rabies analysis. On June 22, 2012, the bat tested negative for rabies.

While in this case the bat proved to be not rabid, there have been several recent instances of wild animals testing positive for rabies in Cochise County. To prevent the spread of rabies and other diseases, Cochise Health & Social Services reminds residents to always use caution when interacting with wild animals, or any animal exhibiting unusual behavior.

Rabies is most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The rabies virus attacks the central nervous system, causing encephalitis. The condition is always fatal once symptoms appear. Rabies can be prevented in persons who have come into contact or have been bitten by wild animals through prompt administration of anti-rabies vaccine. Hundreds of rabies treatments are initiated annually in Arizona to prevent rabies from developing after exposure.

In Arizona, the principal rabies hosts are bats, skunks, and foxes. These animals carry their own distinct rabies virus variants. When rabies activity within these animal groups increases, rabies can "spillover" into other mammal species, such as bobcats, coyotes, javelina, cats, dogs, horses, and cows.

In Arizona, bats present the most common source of rabies exposures to humans because rabid bats often fall to the ground where they are easily accessible to people and pets. Bats are generally not aggressive. Exposure to rabid bats usually occurs when people pick up or handle a sick or dead bat. Other rabies exposures occur when people try to approach or feed wild animals, or in some cases, are attacked by rabid animals such as foxes, bobcats, and skunks. Most rabies exposures can be avoided by simply leaving bats and other wild animals alone. The last documented human rabies death in Arizona was in 1981.

All bite or contact exposures should be reported immediately to local animal control or health officials. For further information on rabies prevention, please see <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/index.html>.

### About Cochise Health & Social Services

Cochise Health & Social Services was formed in October 2011 when the Cochise County Health Department and Cochise Aging and Social Services were combined into a single operating unit. The department promotes health and quality of life for all Cochise County residents through education, service and leadership.

For more information, please visit our website at <http://cochise.az.gov/health>.

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