



9/16/2011

## ***DEAD BAT WITH RABIES FOUND IN PUBLIC SETTING***

### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Anyone who may have touched a dead bat inside the Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Store in West Olympia (9/2/11 – 9/9/11) should contact the Health Department at 360-867-2500 for a screening interview.

**SITUATION:** A dead bat was found among Halloween decorations at the Jo-Ann's store in West Olympia on Friday, September 9, 2011. Subsequent testing revealed that the bat had rabies. Two individuals who handled and played with the bat and had significant exposure are receiving prophylactic treatment.

The Halloween decorations were put up on display on September 2nd. We have not been able to ascertain where the bat came from, how it died, or how it came to be in that particular section of the store. Employees at the store have been informed and asked about touching the bat. Anyone who touched the bat is being asked to call the Health Department for an evaluation.

Due to the high volume of Jo-Ann customers, it is possible that someone may have touched the bat thinking it was very real looking. Anyone who touched the bat is being asked to call the Health Department for an evaluation.

Bats are a beneficial and necessary part of our ecosystem, however, human contact with bats are discouraged because of the potential risk of rabies. In Washington State, about 5% of bats submitted for testing due to human contact are found to carry rabies. Persons exposed to rabies can be given preventive treatment so that they do not develop rabies. Once a person has symptoms of rabies, the disease is almost always fatal.

A public information line has been set up at 360-709-3080 to provide current information about the situation. The Thurston County Health Department is set up to handle phone calls from the public and determine whether prophylactic treatment is needed. We will be available on the phone until 9 pm on Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> and again between 8 am and 5 pm on Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup>. **Please refer all concerned to 360-867-2500.** If treatment is recommended, arrangements have been made with some clinics for referrals for treatment.

### **EXPOSURE IS SIGNIFICANT if:**

- Person was at Jo-Ann's in West Olympia between 9/2/11 and 9/9/11, **and**
  - Touched the face (mouth, teeth) **of the bat** in the Halloween display area, **and**
  - Had an open wound on hand or used contaminated hands and touched mucous membrane
- Unattended child was known to have been in Halloween decorations area at Jo-Ann's in West Olympia between 9/2/11 and 9/9/11, **and**
  - Parents or guardians are concerned the child may have touched or handled the bat.
  - Can reach a shelf that is 3 ½ feet high, **and**
  - Likes to touch things, including furry objects, **and**
  - Cannot or will not admit to touching a bat.

Please report all rabies Post-exposure prophylactic treatment to 360-786-5470