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Local health unit reports bat tests positive for rabies

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Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health Unit has confirmed the first case of rabies in a bat this year.

On Aug. 12, a bat tested positive for rabies in Centre Wellington and one person has begun a precautionary treatment protocol for potential exposure to the virus.

?Rabies is a virus that affects mammals and is spread by the saliva of infected animals most commonly through bites, but also through scratches, open wounds or mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and eyes,? reads a statement from the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, issued Aug. 13. ?In Ontario, the animals most commonly testing positive for rabies are bats, skunks, raccoons, coyotes and foxes. Rabies is nearly always fatal once symptoms develop, so treatment must be given as soon as possible if someone suspects exposure to a rabid animal.?

To protect against rabies, avoid contact with wild animals, ensure pets are vaccinated against the virus, supervise pets when outdoors and inform the authorities if an animal is suspected to have rabies.

?Although rabies is rare, it can be fatal when left untreated,? said Dr. Matthew Tenenbaum, associate medical officer of health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health.

?Anyone who has been bitten or scratched by an animal should wash the wound with soap and water for 15 minutes and seek immediate medical attention.?

For more information about rabies, visit?wdgpublichealth.ca/rabies.