

13 September 2015

## **Public urged to contact 13Health after possible contact with infected bat**

The Metro South Public Health Unit is urging anyone who attended the West End markets in Davies Park on Saturday morning (12 September) and came into contact with a bat to call 13 HEALTH.

Metro South Health Public Health Physician Dr Kari Jarvinen said a single bat, found close to death on the ground by a member of the public, has tested positive to Australian Bat Lyssavirus.

Dr Jarvinen said it was important for any person who touched or handled the bat to contact authorities as they faced potential exposure to the virus.

"We need to ascertain what exposure the person has had because immediate treatment following a bat scratch or bite can prevent a very serious and usually lethal disease," Dr Jarvinen said.

"Since 1996 three people have died as a result of Australian bat Lyssavirus (ABL) exposure following bites or scratches from bats.

"More than 100 cases of potential exposure to ABL are reported each year, and usually relate to people being scratched or bitten by bats, often when they attempt to handle the bat.

"A bat bite, scratch or mucous membrane exposure to bat saliva is necessary to transmit the virus. Usually bats do not approach humans, more commonly bat scratches or bites occur if someone is trying to 'rescue' an injured, sick or distressed bat.

"Only vaccinated people who have been trained in the care of bats should ever handle bats.

"If anyone comes across an injured or sick bat, they should not touch it but contact the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (1300 130 372), RSPCA (1300 ANIMAL) or your local wildlife care group/rescuer/carer for assistance."

Anyone who believes they have been exposed should call 13 HEALTH as soon as possible.

For more information visit

<http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/217/10/Australian-Bat-Lyssavirus>

ENDS

**Media contact:** Heidi Braithwaite 0409 140 051