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News Release

June 25, 2009

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Florida Health Department Still Looking for 3 Boys Who Played With Rabid Bat *-Rabies Confirmed in Rescued Bat-*

Fort Myers, FL – Three of the 5 boys that were seen handling a rabid bat last week on a Florida beach are still unidentified. Since rabies is a fatal disease, the Lee County Health Department is trying to locate the 3 remaining youth in order to administer rabies vaccinations.

On Monday, June 15th, at approximately 4:00pm, an eyewitness saw at least 5 boys estimated to be between 10-12 years of age handling, playing and kissing a bat at the Ft. Myers Beach pier. An eyewitness retrieved the bat and since bats are known to carry rabies, it was sent to the state laboratory in Tampa, FL for testing which confirmed the bat had rabies. The state laboratory identified the bat as a Brazilian Free Tail bat.

“Rabies is a fatal disease. There is no known cure for rabies, only vaccination. Therefore, it is critical that the youth who were playing with the bat on Ft. Myers Beach pier are vaccinated as soon as possible” said Dr. Judith A. Hartner, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A., Director of the Lee County Health Department.

For those youth and parents that were visiting Ft. Myers Beach Pier in Florida on Monday, June 15th and have any information on how to contact the youth seen handling a bat, please contact the Lee County Health Department at (239) 332-9501. The phone number will be operational 24-hours per day/ 7-days per week.

For more information concerning rabies and how it spreads please refer to the Florida Department of Health website: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/medicine/rabies/rabies-education.html> and at the Centers for Disease Control website: <http://www.cdc.gov/RABIES/bats.html> or <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/kidsrabies/>

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