



## Statement

9<sup>th</sup> May 2008

### Daubenton's bat tests positive for European Bat Lyssavirus type-2

On 7<sup>th</sup> May 2008 a Daubenton's bat in the South East of England tested positive for the presence of European Bat Lyssavirus type-2 (EBLV2), a strain of rabies occasionally found in bats.

The adult female bat had been found injured by a member of the public in August 2007 and was subsequently in the care of a number of experienced bat workers. It was euthanased on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2008. It was submitted to the Veterinary Laboratories Agency for rabies testing as part of the passive surveillance programme.

Following good practice procedures, all batworkers who handled the bat had previously been vaccinated against the virus, and the Health Protection Agency is arranging for post-exposure treatment where necessary. Post-exposure vaccinations have been 100% effective in preventing the onset of rabies. The Health Protection Agency says the risk of humans being infected by EBLV-2 is negligible if they receive appropriate and timely medical treatment after exposure.

Under the passive surveillance scheme, more than 6,000 bats of many species have been tested for rabies since 1987, but this is only the seventh bat that has tested positive for the virus in the UK - the other cases being in Sussex (1996), Lancashire (2002), Surrey (2004), Lancashire (2004), Oxfordshire (2006) and Shropshire (2007). All have been Daubenton's bats, a species that rarely roosts in houses.

All seven bats that have tested positive were submitted for testing by the unique network of more than 1,000 volunteer bat workers who work to ensure that the small risk presented by this virus is minimised further through following good practice.

Amy Coyte, Chief Executive of the Bat Conservation Trust, said: *"The protection of the public and batworkers is a priority for us, and in the UK, we have excellent systems in place for dealing with the small risk of EBLV2. We provide advice to the public through our Bat Helpline and are very fortunate to have a dedicated network of expert volunteers. Although the risk of the EBLV2 virus is very low, we work hard to ensure that good practice is always followed by people who are in contact with bats to minimise that risk even further."*

*"People can live in harmony with bats – thousands of householders live happily with bat roosts in their homes and every summer many more thousands enjoy venturing out to experience bats in their local environment."*

*"All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law as a result of significant declines in their populations during the past century. They need our help and protection to ensure they are around for future generations to enjoy."*

The Bat Conservation Trust runs the National Bat Helpline (0845 1300 228), which provides free information and up-to-date advice to the public about bats. BCT works closely with the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Health Protection Agency (or Health Protection Scotland) to ensure up to date advice is given.

BCT advises people to avoid handling bats but, if it is necessary to handle a bat, then to wear gloves to avoid being bitten or scratched. In the unlikely event that someone is bitten or scratched by a bat, the bite or scratch should be washed thoroughly with soap and running water and medical attention should be sought immediately (even if that person already has up-to-date rabies vaccinations). Anyone who works with bats in the UK should have pre-exposure rabies vaccinations.

**For further information, please contact the Bat Conservation Trust on Tel: 0845 1300 228 or visit [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk).**

**Frequently asked questions on bats and rabies can be found on the Defra website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/rabies/q&a.htm>**

***The Bat Conservation Trust is the only national charity solely devoted to conserving bats and their habitats in the UK. It has almost 5,000 members and thousands of dedicated volunteers who work together to help bats. All bats and their roosts are protected by law.***