**Managing Bat Encounters and Risk of Rabies**

Rabies is an infectious viral disease that can be transmitted through bats. It is almost always fatal following the onset of clinical symptoms; however, it is 100% preventable through prompt appropriate medical care. Most bats do not have rabies and the number of human deaths from rabies is small.

**Bat Proofing Your Home**

* Caulk any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch.
* Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics.
* Fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking.
* Ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.
* Prevent bats from roosting in attics or buildings by covering outside entry points. Observe where the bats exit at dusk and keep them from coming back by loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting over these areas. Bats can crawl out and leave but cannot re-enter. When all the bats are gone, the openings can be permanently sealed.
  + Avoid doing this from May-August. If there are young bats in your attic, many of them can’t fly and keeping the adults out will trap the young who will die or try to make their way into your rooms.
* Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to “bat-proof” your home.

**Determining If Bats Are Already in Your Home**

* Listen for squeaking noises coming from the attic, walls or elsewhere.
* Look for signs of roosting bats (e.g., evidence of bat guano and crystallized urine, or bare scratched areas on beams) in the attic space, rafters. Porches and walls.
* Check outside the house at dusk to see if bats are flying out of the house to feed, or before dawn to see if bats are flying into the house to roost.

**Consider These Tips to Get a Bat Out of the House**

* Bat exclusion techniques. Killing or poisoning bats is seldom necessary or desirable.
* Sealing openings after bats have exited the space to avoid driving them into occupied areas or creating a sanitary problem when they die.
* Doing major home renovations and sealing openings in the winter when most bats have left buildings.
* Using special netting in a manner that allows bats to exit the house, but not to re-enter.
* Consulting with a licensed pest control expert specializing in bat control.

**Risk-Assessment for Exposure to a Bat**

Most people that have been bitten by a bat report that it feels like a stinging or needle prick sensation. However, bat bites can occur without being noticed or felt such as when someone is sleeping or the bat flies into a person. Bat bites are often quite small and leave little to no evidence of a wound or puncture. All bat that are potentially exposed to a human or a domestic animal should be submitted for rabies testing, if available because it is much easier to test the bat that the human or domestic animal. (Table on next page will provide guidance on possible bat rabies exposure.)

**Table 1.** Exposure Risk Based on Encounter with Bat

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| **High Risk of Exposure: Post-exposure prevention recommended** | **Low or No Risk of Exposure: Post-exposure prevention not recommended** |
| * Adult witnesses’ bat in room with previously unattended child or pet * Person touches bat without seeing which part of bat they touched * Bat flies into someone and touched bare skin * Adult sees bat fly into child and child reports “it hit me” * Someone with bare feet that steps on live or dead bat * Unidentified flying object hits someone and the time of day (dusk or dawn), presence of marks where it hit, and place that it was coming from (good for roosting bats) all support that it was a bat and not a bird or insect * Person awakens to find a bat in the room with them * Person slept in camp cabin which was small, closed-in, and bats were swooping past sleeping people * Bat found in room with a person with sensory or mental impairment * Bat found in room with an intoxicated person * Person puts hand in firewood or brush, feels pain, then sees a bat * Person touches teeth of bat | * Touching fur, wings, or legs of a live bat while looking at it * Bat brushes past thick long hair of teenager or adult and they are certain there was no skin contact * Person has contact with a completely dried up carcass of a dead bat * Bat swoops past awake teenager or adult, but the person feels no contact with bat * Dead bat found in home with no evidence that a child touched it * Bats are heard or seen in walls or attic of house * Bats are found in other parts of the house even if bedroom doors were open * Bats are heard or seen hanging from upper rafters of a large A-frame cabin * Bat guano or other signs are found in sleeping quarters * Bat found in sleeping quarters at a time when no one is there or there is an awake adult * The person is certain that a bite, scratch or mucous membrane did not occur * Touching something a bat touched |

**Determining the Rabies Status of the Bat**

In the case that there is any reasonable probability of a human or domestic animal exposure, the bat should be safely captured, and the local health department should be contacted and the proper euthanasia, shipping, and testing procedures will be conducted.

*How to Safely Capture a Bat*

* Close windows and doors and turn on the lights in the room where the bat is located.
* Wait for the bat to land.
* Wear leather gloves and use a container such as a coffee can or a cardboard box. Do not use pillowcases, blankets, or towels as bats may bite through the fabric.
* Approach bat slowly and place container over the bat. Then slide a piece of cardboard under the bat and flip the container over, trapping the bat inside.
* If the bat is alive, make sure to punch small airholes in the lid. Secure the lid with tape.
* Be careful not to shake or otherwise traumatize the bat as this can damage the brain, rendering it untestable for rabies.
* If the bat is dead, keep it cool but avoid freezing it.
* Contact your local health department to submit the bat for rabies testing. Keep the bat in a dark, cool place until it can be euthanized.