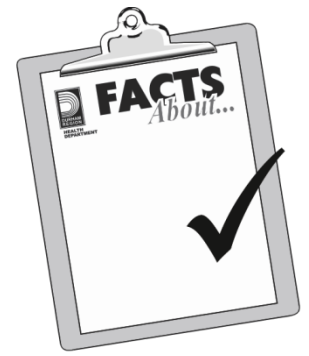




FACTS *About...*



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Rabies and Bats

What is it?

Rabies is an infectious disease caused by a virus that affects the central nervous system of humans and warm blooded animals. It is spread by contact with the saliva of an infected animal. Rabies is nearly always fatal in humans and animals. Like other animals, bats can carry rabies. The main types of bats found in Ontario are the Little Brown Bats and the Big Brown Bats.

How is it transmitted?

Careless handling of bats is the primary source of rabies exposure from bats. Rabies can also be transmitted through the bite of an infected bat. A major difference between bats and other rabies carriers is that bats are small and can bite a human without the person ever knowing it. If you ever wake up and find a bat (dead or alive) in the room with you or a bat is found in a room with an incapacitated person or unattended child, the possibility exists that a bite has occurred. Any bat should be considered rabid unless captured and proven otherwise. Bats have small needle-like teeth and claws. Bites from a bat can easily go undetected.

How can I tell if a bat has rabies?

You cannot tell if a bat has rabies just by looking at it. Rabies can only be confirmed by having the bat tested in a laboratory. There are signs to indicate a bat may be rabid. Rabid bats often lose their ability to fly or do not fly well. They rarely become aggressive. Any bat that is active by day, acting strangely, crawling on the ground or is found in a place where bats are not usually seen (i.e., a room in your home or on the lawn) may be rabid. Such bats are often the most easily approached. It is best never to handle any bats.

What should I do if I encounter or have contact with a bat?

If you are bitten by a bat or if infectious material (i.e., saliva) from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth or a wound, wash the affected area thoroughly and seek medical attention immediately. If you awaken and find a bat (dead or alive) in your room or in the room of an unattended child or an incapacitated person, seek medical advice. Whenever possible the bat should be captured and sent for rabies testing. If you find a bat in your home and are absolutely sure that there was no human or animal contact, try to confine that bat to one room, turn off the lights and open a window so the bat can fly out.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

How can I keep bats out of my home?

Bat-proofing should be done around your house to prevent bats from entering into your home. Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats entry into your living quarters. Any openings larger than a ¼ inch by ½ inch should be caulked. Use window screens, chimney caps and draft guards beneath doors to attics, fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly. Additional “bat-proofing” can prevent bats from roosting in attics or a building by covering outside entry points. Observe where the bats exit at dusk and exclude them by loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting over these areas. Bats can crawl out and leave, but cannot re-enter. After the bats have been excluded, the openings can be permanently sealed.

Things to remember when “bat-proofing”:

- During summer, many young bats are unable to fly. If you exclude adult bats during this time, the young may be trapped inside and die or make their way into living quarters. Avoid exclusion from May through August.
- Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to “bat-proof” your home.

How can I safely capture a bat in my home?

In situations in which a bat is physically present and you cannot reasonably rule out the possibility of exposure, safely capture the bat for rabies testing. Use precautions to capture the bat.

What you will need:

- Leather work gloves
- Small box or coffee can
- Piece of cardboard and tape

When the bat lands, approach it slowly while wearing the gloves and place the box or coffee can over it. Slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard to the container securely and punch small holes in the cardboard. If a dead bat is found in the home and you cannot rule out human or pet exposure, handle the bat safely. Always wear gloves and if possible, use forceps or tongs to pick the bat up and place it into a doubled-bag. Place the bag into the freezer and contact the Health Department or local animal services agency to make arrangements for rabies testing.

How can I protect myself?

- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals wild or domestic, even if they are friendly.
- Have all dead, sick or easily captured bats tested for rabies if exposure cannot be ruled out.
- “Bat-proof” to prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools and other similar areas where they might contact people and pets.
- Capture and handle bats safely. Always wear gloves (i.e., leather gloves).
- Be a responsible pet owner by keeping vaccinations current for all domestic animals. Keep your pets inside and under direct supervision and call animal control to remove stray animals from your neighborhood.
- Wash any wound from an animal thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately. **Report animal bites to the Health Department at 1-888-777-9613**

May 8, 2006

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