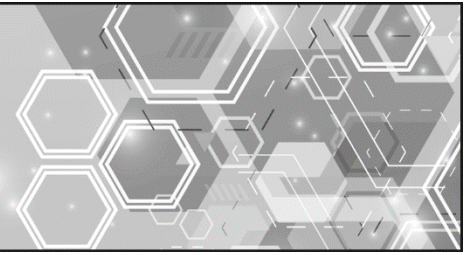




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Rabies and Bats

What is it?

Rabies is a serious but preventable viral disease affecting the central nervous system of humans and warm-blooded animals. Once symptoms appear, the disease is fatal. In Canada, the animals that most often transmit rabies are wildlife species, such as raccoons, foxes, skunks, and bats.

How is it transmitted?

Rabies is transmitted through the bite or scratch of an infected bat or through direct contact with saliva from an infected bat. Careless handling of bats can also lead to potential exposure. Bats have small, needle-like teeth and claws, making their bites and scratches difficult to see but capable of transmitting the virus. 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. All bats should be considered rabid unless captured and tested to rule out the possibility of rabies.

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. However, there are signs that may indicate a bat is rabid. Rabid bats often lose their ability to fly or do not fly well and 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 (e.g., 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're bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound with soap and water, and seek medical attention immediately. Also seek urgent medical attention if bat saliva or brain material gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound. If you awaken to find a bat (dead or alive) in your room or in the room of an unattended child or an incapacitated person, seek medical advice. If possible, the bat should be captured by a pest control professional and sent for rabies testing.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

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



How can I keep bats out of my home?

Homes should be bat-proofed to prevent bats from entering. Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats to enter. Any openings larger than a ¼ inch by ½ inch should be sealed. 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 indoors by covering outside entry points. Observe where bats exit at dusk and exclude them by loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting over these areas. This will ensure bats can escape but cannot re-enter. After all bats have been excluded, the openings can be permanently sealed.

Things to remember when “bat-proofing”:

- Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to “bat-proof” your home. Avoid exclusion from May through August.
- 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.

How can I protect myself from the transmission of rabies?

- Stay away from wild animals, especially bats, skunks, raccoons, and foxes and teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals (wild or domestic), even if they appear friendly.
- Wash any wound from an animal thoroughly with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.
- “Bat-proof” your home and other public spaces (e.g., schools, churches, etc.) to prevent bats from entering and having contact with people and pets.
- If you are unsure if a bite or scratch occurred, contact a pest control professional to safely capture the bat and contact the Health Department to arrange for testing.
- 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 for assistance with sick or injured wildlife.
- Report all animal exposures to the Durham Region Health Department at 1-800-841-2729.

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