



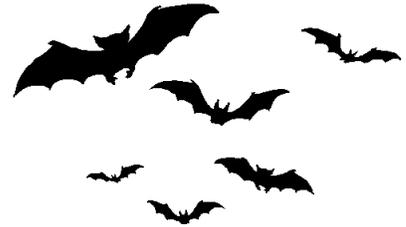
# Bats and Rabies

## What is rabies?

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that affects the nervous system of humans and other warm blooded mammals. If exposed to a rabid animal, rabies in humans is 100% preventable through prompt appropriate medical care. On the other hand, once symptoms begin following an exposure to a rabid animal, rabies is almost always fatal. Therefore, exposure to a potentially rabid animal is something to take very seriously.

## How does a person or animal get rabies?

The rabies virus is found only in the brain material, spinal cord fluid, and saliva of an infected animal. Rabies is most commonly spread through a bite from an infected animal. Less commonly, rabies is spread through non-bite exposures such as when virus-containing saliva, brain material, or spinal cord fluid comes in contact with an open wound (less than 24 hours old) or mucous membranes (i.e., eyes, nose, or mouth).



### You **CANNOT** get rabies from the following:

- Contact with blood
- Contact with urine or feces
- Contact with dried saliva
- Petting, or otherwise touching the hair of a rabid animal
- Touching bowls, lead ropes, gates, trailers, or other surfaces the rabid animal contacted

## How can I tell if a bat has rabies?

You can't tell if a bat has rabies by just looking at it. Rabies can only be confirmed in bats and other animals by a laboratory test. However, any bat that is out during the day; any bat that is found in a place where bats are not usually seen (ex: a room in your home or on the lawn); or a bat that is unable to fly, may have rabies.

## What should I do if I come in contact with a bat?

If you are bitten by a bat, or if you have a non-bite exposure (as described above), wash the area and get medical advice immediately. Whenever possible, capture the bat and send it for rabies testing at the OSDH Public Health Lab.

Sometimes, people don't know they have been bitten by a bat, because bats have small teeth which may leave marks that are not easily seen. Therefore, in certain cases you may need to seek medical advice even if you don't see a bite wound. For example, if you awaken and find a bat in your room, see a bat in the room of an unattended child, or see a bat near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person, seek medical advice and have the bat tested for rabies at the OSDH Public Health Lab.

If you would like to discuss a potential exposure or a bat found in your home, please contact the Acute Disease Service Epi-on-Call to discuss your situation 24/7/365 at (405) 271-4060.

## What should I do if my pet is exposed to a bat?

If you think it possible your pet has been exposed to a bat, capture the bat and contact a veterinarian immediately to have the bat tested for rabies. Remember to keep your pets currently vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian.

## How can I safely capture a bat in my home?

If you find a bat in your home and there is any question that the bat had contact with people or pets, you will want to have the bat captured and tested for rabies. Leave the bat alone and contact animal control for assistance. If professional help is unavailable, follow these steps to capture the bat safely:

- Find a small box or coffee can and a piece of cardboard. This will be used to capture the bat.
- Put on leather gloves, and when the bat lands, approach it slowly 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 and punch small holes in the cardboard so the bat can breathe.
- Contact a veterinarian to euthanize the bat.
- Work with a veterinarian to send the bat in for rabies testing at the OSDH Public Health Lab.

If you see a bat in your home and you are 100% sure no people or pets had contact with the bat (even unknowingly), confine the bat to a room by closing all the doors and windows leading out of the room except those to the outside. The bat will probably leave soon. If not, it can be caught, as described above, and released outdoors away from people and pets.

Prior to releasing a bat from your home, please feel free to call the Acute Disease Service Epi-on-Call to discuss the situation 24/7/365 at (405) 271-4060. We are also happy to discuss unusual situations in which people may have come in contact with a bat (ex: while at camp or during another outdoor activity).

## How can I keep bats out of my home?

For assistance with “bat-proofing” your home, contact a professional specializing in bat removal (i.e., exterminator). If you choose to do the “bat-proofing” yourself, here are some suggestions.

- Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats entry into your living quarters. Any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-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.
- Cover outside entry points with loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting. The best time to “bat-proof” your home is in the fall or winter, so as not to trap young bats inside where they may die or make their way into the living quarters.
- For more information about “bat-proofing” your home, visit the Bat Conservation International’s website at <http://www.batcon.org/>.



### Key Points

- DO NOT handle bats. Teach children to avoid handling bats and other unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear to be friendly.
- If you are bitten by a bat, wash the bite wound with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.
- If exposed DO NOT release the bat. Capture the bat and contact your veterinarian to euthanize the bat so it can be sent to the OSDH Public Health Lab for rabies testing.
- Animals should be kept currently vaccinated by a licensed veterinarian against rabies to protect yourself, your family, your pets, and your community.
- If you think your pet was bitten by a bat or is found playing with a bat, consult your veterinarian.