

Health Unit Media Release



Date: August 8, 2006

Contact: Ms. Jane Lyster, Director of Health Protection (613) 345-5685 and
1-800-660-5853

BAT AWARENESS

Although bats are beneficial they do have the potential to carry diseases such as rabies and histoplasmosis, which can affect humans and animals. They may also transmit distemper and mange to household pets. **The mandatory rabies vaccination protects your pets from rabies.**

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system. It is found in the saliva of infected animals and is transmitted through a bite or by direct contact between infected saliva and the eyes, nose, mouth or into an open wound or scratch. **Bat's teeth are tiny and razor sharp and thus bite marks may not be noticeable. Rabies is fatal if left untreated.** The most common signs of rabies in a bat are the inability to fly and resting in unusual places such as the ground.

Bat Encounters

If you are bitten by a bat or if saliva from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth or a wound, wash the affected area thoroughly and get medical attention immediately. If the bat can be captured without further exposure, the health unit can arrange for it to be tested for rabies. Rabies can only be confirmed through a laboratory test of brain tissue.

Should you find a bat in your home where a person was sleeping, or the person is an infant, a child, impaired, or mentally challenged, and contact with the bat is difficult/impossible to determine, immediately notify your family physician and local public health unit regarding treatment. If the bat can be trapped without physical contact the Health Unit can arrange for the bat to be sent for rabies testing. Should the test confirm that the bat was rabid, the Health Unit in consultation with your family doctor can provide rabies treatment.

If you find a bat in your home and are absolutely sure that there was no human or animal contact, try to confine the bat to one room by closing the door of the room, opening a window or door to the outside and then turn out the lights. The bat should fly out early in the evening. Be sure to wear gloves and other protective clothing at all times.

Bat Proofing Your Home

Bat proofing your house is necessary when the bats are entering the living space of your home. It is advisable to contact a pest management company or a wildlife conservation agency for assistance with bat-proofing your home.

For more information contact your local health unit or these websites:

Ministry of Natural Resources

www.mnr.gov.on.ca

Bat Conservation International

www.batcon.org

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

www.inspection.gc.ca/english/animas/heasan/disemala/rabrag/rabragfse.shtml

###