

Health Unit Media Release

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Health Unit raises awareness about bats and 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. 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 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. Open 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 when dealing with a bat.

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. Should you find a bat in your home where a person was sleeping, or the person is an infant, child, impaired or mentally challenged, and contact with the bat is difficult/impossible to determine, immediately notify your Health Care Provider and local public health unit regarding treatment. Rabies can only be confirmed through a laboratory test of brain tissue. Should the test confirm that the bat was rabid, the Health Unit in consultation with your family doctor can provide rabies treatment.

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.

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, which applies to both outdoor and indoor dogs and cats, protects your pets from rabies.** Rabies Clinics are being held once again on September 12 and 19th. The cost is \$20.00 per animal, please visit our website for more information.

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/anima/heasan/disemala/rabrag/rabragfse.shtml