

Health Unit Media Release

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Health Unit raises awareness about bats and rabies

The Health Unit encourages residents to get more information about bats to help protect them from rabies.

Bats typically have their babies in June and come August many of the young bats are looking for their own roosting sites. Many bats will roost and hibernate in attics. Bats are nocturnal animals and feed most actively two or three hours following sunset. Bats are efficient insect controllers eating about three times their body weight. **Although bats are beneficial, they can carry diseases such as rabies and histoplasmosis, which can affect humans and animals.** They may also transmit distemper and mange to household pets. Approximately three percent of bats carry the rabies virus. The most common signs of rabies in bats are the inability to fly and resting in unusual places such as the ground or floor. **It is important to remember many of the bats that get into our homes are healthy bats and are looking for a way out.**

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 and a bite is difficult/impossible to determine due to the person's age, or impairment contact your Health Care provider and the Public Health Unit regarding treatment for rabies. Rabies can be confirmed through a laboratory test of brain tissue from the bat. If the test confirms 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.

Rabies can also affect pets; to protect your pet from rabies it is important to vaccinate them. Rabies vaccination is mandatory in Ontario for domestic cats and dogs. The Health Unit, in partnership with local veterinarians and municipalities, will be holding Rabies Vaccination Clinics on September 11 and 18th. The cost is \$20.00 per animal; please visit our website for more information.

www.healthunit.org/rabies.

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/anim/hasan/disemala/rabrag/rabragfse.shtml