

## **Health Unit Raises Awareness About Bats and Rabies**

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. 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. 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 are unsure if it has bitten a family member, contact your Health Care Provider and the Health Unit to determine if treatment is required. Prior to calling, check for fresh bites and scratches that may be a result of contact with the bat.

### **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.

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 the annual Rabies Clinics on September 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. 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](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca)

Bat Conservation International [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)

Public Health Agency of Canada [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)