

For Immediate Release
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Be Cautious with Bats Around

Bats in search of food may enter homes and other living spaces through cracks along the roof line, and may choose to live in small dark places, particularly in attics. Bats are common carriers of the rabies virus, and people, pets and wild animals who come in contact with an infected bat may be at risk. It is estimated that around 40,000 people each year in the U.S. receive rabies vaccine following exposure to a bat.

“Bats that are found in a bedroom when a person is sleeping should be checked for rabies if the bat can be captured”, says Tom Fountain Director of Environmental Health for the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. “A sleeping person cannot be sure if a bat scratches or bites them, especially because bats have such tiny teeth, so this is protocol” says Fountain. Any other bat which is found inside alive should be removed without harming the bat if possible. Or if you see a bat outside, and it appears to be sick, injured, or a baby, leave it alone and keep children and domestic animals away from it. The bat will likely leave on its own.

Capture a bat when it is resting. Do not touch the bat with your bare hands; wear leather gloves and use a piece of cardboard to nudge the bat into an aluminum coffee can or a box with a lid. Close the lid and tape it shut to prevent the bat from escaping. Then call your local health department for further instructions on getting the bat tested for rabies. Also, contact the health department if you are unable to capture a bat that was found in a room with a young child, pet, or sleeping individual. Health Department staff will advise you if rabies vaccination is recommended. Rabies is a very serious, fatal disease so it is important that humans and pets receive proper treatment after a potential exposure.

Decrease the likelihood of bats entering your home with screens on windows and doors, especially those above the first floor, and secure any cracks along soffits and roof lines. Bats can squeeze into very small spaces, and can move inside the walls and eventually enter the living spaces. Be sure to finish any openings at the top or bottom of walls, typically where crown molding or base boards are installed.

For more information on bats and rabies, please go to www.cdc.gov/rabies, or www.michigan.gov/dnr.

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