

Bat Rabies Fact Sheet

- 1. What is the significance of Bat Rabies in the United States?** - Bats are considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health to be high-risk animals for transmitting rabies infection to humans. Most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States have been caused by rabies virus from bats. Awareness of the facts about bats and rabies can help people protect themselves, their families, and their pets.
- 2. How can I tell if a Bat has Rabies?** - Rabies can be confirmed only in a laboratory. However, any bat that is active by day, is found in a place where bats are not usually seen (in a room, in your home or on the lawn), or is unable to fly, is far more likely than others to be rabid. Such bats are often the most easily approached. Therefore, it is best never to handle any bat. On average, 36 bats are found to be rabid each year in Pennsylvania often with human exposure.
- 3. What should I do if I come in Contact with a Bat?** - If you are bitten by a bat -- or if infectious material (such as saliva) from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound -- wash the affected area thoroughly and get medical advice immediately. Whenever possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a laboratory for rabies testing.
- 4. How can I safely capture a Bat in my Home?** - If a bat is present in your home and you cannot rule out the possibility of exposure, leave the bat alone and contact an animal-control or public health agency for assistance. If professional help is unavailable, use precautions to capture the bat safely, as described below. What you will need: (a) leather work gloves (put them on), (b) small box or coffee can, (c) piece of cardboard, and (d) tape. When the bat lands, approach it slowly, while wearing the gloves, and place the box or coffee can over it. Slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard to the container securely, and punch small holes in the cardboard, allowing the bat to breathe. Contact your health department or animal-control authority to make arrangements for rabies testing. If you see a bat in your home and you are sure no human or pet exposure has occurred, confine the bat to a room by closing all doors and windows leading out of the room except those to the outside. The bat will probably leave soon. If not, it can be caught, as described, and released outdoors away from people and pets.
- 5. When should I seek Medical Care?** - Since bats have very small teeth which may leave marks that are not easily seen, in situations in which a bat is present in the home and the person(s) cannot exclude the possibility of a bite, post-exposure treatment with rabies vaccine should be seriously considered unless prompt laboratory testing of the bat has ruled out the possibility that the bat was infected with the rabies virus. When an exposure to a bat may have occurred, we recommend that a health care provider is consulted and the local health department be notified.
- 6. How can I Protect Myself?** - All bats should be excluded from houses and surrounding structures to prevent contact with humans. Structures should be made bat proof by sealing



entrances used by bats (bats can enter through openings as small as 1/4 inch). Further, bat houses should not be located near dwellings. In general, bats should be avoided at all times.

7. **Can Rabies in Bats be Controlled?** - There is currently no practical way to control the spread of rabies virus within bat populations. It is neither feasible nor desirable to control rabies infection in bats by reducing bat populations, because bats are an important part of Pennsylvania's natural ecosystem.
8. **For more information:** <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.