

## Washington County Public Health Bat Safety

**It is not unusual to find bats in homes in New York State, and the presence of bats usually does not result in a need for rabies post-exposure treatment.**

**Most (~98%) bats tested at the NYS Wadsworth Center's Rabies Laboratory are negative for rabies.**

**However, because many of the recent human cases of rabies may have acquired their disease from a bat bite in a home situation, all reasonable steps should be taken to keep bats out of the home environment, especially sleeping quarters.**

To keep bats from getting into buildings, **bat-proofing** techniques should include:

- Not leaving unscreened doors open to the outside
- Not leaving unscreened windows open to the outside
- Making sure windows have screens, chimneys are capped, and electrical and plumbing openings are plugged
- Sealing up all openings larger than ½ inch by ½ inch square into the attic, basement, walls, or occupied areas of the house
- Using materials such as expanding spray-on foam, caulk, wire mesh, wood that fits tightly, steel wool (around pipes that enter buildings), or polypropylene bird netting, to seal or cover gaps and holes.

To determine whether bats are already in a house, evidence can be obtained by:

- Hearing squeaking noises coming from attic, walls, or elsewhere
- Inspecting attic space, rafters, porches, and walls for signs of roosting bats, including bat guano and crystallized urine, or bare scratched areas on beams
- Walking around the outside of the house at dusk to see if bats are flying out of the house to feed, or before dawn to see if bats are flying into the house to roost

**To get bats out of a house in which they are roosting or entering, bat exclusion techniques should include the following considerations:**

- **Killing or poisoning the bats is seldom a necessary or desirable solution**
- **Openings should not be sealed while bats are inside—this may drive them into occupied areas or create a sanitary problem if the bats are trapped and die inside**
- **Major home renovations and sealing should be done during the winter when most bats have left buildings**
- **The bats' entry and exit points should be determined by observing the house at dusk or dawn as described above**
- **Special netting can be used in a manner that allows bats to exit the house, but not to re-enter it**
- **Pest control experts specializing in bat control should be consulted when necessary**

**If a bat is found in a home, building or camp setting, it is important to attempt to capture the bat so it may be tested for rabies if there has been a risk for exposure. Recommendations for bat capture in a building include:**

- Wear gloves and avoid direct skin contact with the bat
- Avoid damage to the bat's head
- Confine the bat to one room (close the windows, the room and closet doors)
- Turn on lights if room is dark
- Wait for the bat to land
- Cover the bat with a coffee can or similar container
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the can trapping the bat
- Tape the cardboard tightly to the can
- If necessary, use a net or long pole with a piece of duct tape (sticky side out) to capture bat
- Do not use glue board to capture bat (it cannot be easily removed for rabies testing)
- Immediately contact local health authority to arrange for rabies examination of the bat

**If you feel you have been exposed to a bat, whether inside your home, office building, or outdoors, contact Washington County Public Health immediately at (518) 746-2400.**