



BATS AND RABIES: SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION



Jordi Segers

Healthy bats will defend themselves if people try to touch them.

Bats are important!

Bats are important animals that benefit us and our environment in many ways, including the insect pest management services they provide; however, as with all wildlife, it is best to appreciate them at a safe distance.

What is the risk of rabies?

Rabies is always a risk wherever bats are present, so it is a risk in every province and territory in Canada. However, people getting rabies from bats occurs rarely (from 1950-2019, there have only been 7 human cases of bat rabies infections in Canada).

What to look out for:

Bats that are behaving strangely are more likely to be sick, possibly from rabies. Such behaviours include: being active in the daylight, being found on the ground, and lacking defensive actions when people attempt to handle or touch them.

http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/docs/fact_sheets/Rabies_Fact_Sheet.pdf

Seek treatment!

While rabies is almost always fatal once a person starts showing symptoms, it is also preventable if you seek appropriate medical advice and treatment immediately after coming into contact with a bat:

1. Never touch a bat (dead or alive) with your bare hands.
2. If you DO touch a bat with your bare skin, immediately wash the area for fifteen minutes with soap and water and call your local public health unit. If the bat is still accessible, please contact a trained wildlife or animal control worker to safely capture the bat in case it is needed for rabies testing.
3. Call your local public health unit if a bat has been found in a room with: an unattended child, a sleeping person, a mentally impaired person, or a person under the influence of drugs or alcohol to the extent that it could impair their judgment.
4. If your pet or farm animal is suspected to have come into contact with a bat, contact your veterinarian, even if your animal is already vaccinated against rabies.

For more information see: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/rabies-wildlife>



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