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Bats and Rabies – What You Need to Know

The Cayuga County Health Department is reminding residents to take precautions to protect themselves and their families from exposure to rabies from bats. The Cayuga County Health Department received a number of calls recently from concerned individuals who had found bats in their homes.

Since attics and crawl spaces heat up in the summer months, bats will seek cooler locations throughout the lower floors of the home. This results in more accidental contact than any other time of the year.

Finding a bat in your home

If a bat is found in a home the bat should be captured and submitted for rabies testing under the following circumstances:

- A person had direct physical contact with a bat.
- A bat is found in a room with people who are sleeping.
- A bat is found in a room with an unattended child or impaired adult.
- A bat is in contact with a domestic pet (dog or cat).

To capture a bat in the home, we have a video posted on our YouTube channel and website. The bat should not be hit or crushed as this can make the bat untestable for rabies. After capturing the bat, store in a cool place, freeze if possible, and call the Cayuga County Health Department at 315-253-1560 during business hours. The bat will be sent to the laboratory for rabies testing on the next business day.

What is rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that is transmitted through the bite of or saliva exposure from a rabid animal. It is important to remember that rabies is a fatal disease that cannot be cured once a person begins to have symptoms. Fortunately, however, rabies is PREVENTABLE.

Protect your family from bats

The majority of people who die from rabies in the U.S. contract the disease from bats. To keep bats out of your house, bat-proof your home by looking for holes in places like the garage, attic, and basement and plug them with steel wool. Repair window screen holes with wire mesh and caulk any other openings or cracks.



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Prevent your pet from getting rabies

Be sure to visit your veterinarian with your pet on a regular basis and keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all cats, ferrets, and dogs. New York State Public Health Law requires that all puppies and kittens get their initial shot at four months of age, with a booster every three years. Ferrets must get a shot every year.

For more information about rabies prevention, visit:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/>
