



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

JO DAVIESS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Bats and of their potential risk of transmitting rabies.

Bats are among the most unique and fascinating of all animals. No other mammal can fly. Bats use echolocation to find flying insects at night. Bats also have good night vision. They actually are not blind, as myth would have you believe. All 12 species of bats in Illinois are protected by law with four species types being considered endangered. Bats have one to two pups per year in May or June. Bats are considered beneficial animals because they eat insects however in certain situations they may pose a threat to human/animal health.

Although rabies in humans is rare, bats are the most common source of rabies in the United States. In 2016 there were 1478 bats tested in Illinois for rabies, 62 of the bats tested were found to have rabies. There were no positive findings within Jo Daviess County however.

Rabies is a viral disease that causes encephalitis (brain inflammation) in humans and animals. Humans/animals can become infected when bitten by a rabid bat. Transmission also can occur when an infected bat's saliva comes in contact with a person's/animals eye, nose, mouth, scratch or wound while the bat is being beaten or crushed. The time of exposure to the appearance of symptoms of rabies can vary from days to years. Treatment needs to be started as soon as possible after the exposure to be effective. Once symptoms appear rabies is almost always fatal. Rabid bats may exhibit no obvious abnormalities, so precautions need to be taken when dealing with bats.

Bats flying outside at night pose little risk. However, bats that are flying outside during the day, flopping around on the ground, landing on or near you or others should be avoided. Parents should educate your children to avoid contact with bats and keep your pets vaccinated and away from bats as well.

In the event a bat is found in your home and you are certain no person or pet had contact with the bat you can attempt to confine the bat in the room it is in by closing all doors and windows leading out of the room except those to the outside in hopes that the bat will leave the room on his own. If the bat does not leave within a reasonable amount of time, contact the animal control staff at JDCHD 815-776-0326 for assistance. If help isn't available, follow the steps to capture and release the bat.

If you wake up and find a bat in the same room with you or you find a bat in a room with someone unable to state if she/he was bitten (intoxicated, high, infant/ small child, person with dementia, mentally challenged) the bat should be captured and tested to rule out rabies.

If you experience a known bite from a bat or have direct physical contact with a bat, the bite or contact area should be washed immediately with soap and water and the person should seek medical advice immediately. Whenever possible the bat should be captured and tested.

Bats should only be captured when wearing heavy leather gloves and a net or you can also capture the bat by covering it with a box or can and then sliding a piece of cardboard or other stiff material under the container to trap the bat inside. If you are certain there has been no contact between the bat and any person or pet, carefully take the box/container outside and release the bat away from buildings, people and pets. Additional information on capturing a bat can be found at: www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats.

If there is any question as to whether human contact as occurred, you should save the animal for testing. You will need to tape the cardboard/or other material to the container to secure the bat inside, be sure to provide air holes in the container top, then notify the Jo-Daviess County Health Department/ Animal Control Office at 1-815-777-0263.

In the event that the bat is not captured for testing and an actual or potential human exposure has occurred: You should contact your medical provider, the local emergency room or the JDCHD- Communicable Disease staff at 1-815-777-0263 immediately, as you may require post exposure prophylactic treatment.

If it is after hours and you or a person you know has experienced a known or potential human exposure to a bat- whether you have captured the bat or not- you should immediately contact you medical provider, or local emergency room, as you may require post exposure prophylactic treatment.

If you think your pet has been bitten by a bat, or you find your pet with a bat, you should capture the bat for testing and contact your veterinarian for assistance.

Bat exclusion remains the best way to prevent and control bats from entering your home. Exclusion should occur during the months of September through April. Additional information on bat exclusion from structures/homes can be found at www.dph.illinois.gov

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