



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Savannah Bergman, BS
Microbiologist II/Rabies Program Manager
715-839-4718, savannah.bergman@co.eau-claire.wi.us

Fall Temperatures Increase Chance of Rabies Exposure for your Family & Pets

Eau Claire, WI – October 1st, 2021 – As temperatures drop, bats and other animals often look for a new home indoors. This increases the chance for bats to have accidental contact with our family members and household pets (even our mostly “indoor” pets).

“If you find a bat in your home and there is a known or possible exposure to a human and/or pets it is important to try and capture the bat so it can be submitted for rabies testing,” says Savannah Bergman, Rabies Program Manager at the Health Department. “When capturing a bat, it is important to not expose yourself to the animal. Wear leather gloves and use an ice cream pail, coffee can or similar sized container to secure the bat inside. Then call the Health Department to see if the bat needs to be sent in for testing.”



In Wisconsin, skunks and bats are by far the most likely animals to carry the rabies virus. Bats don't show signs of rabies; it's impossible to tell if they carry the virus without laboratory testing. It's possible to get rabies even when you don't see any bite marks from the animal. Bat bites or scratches may be so small that you don't even notice them. Rabies exposure is almost always through a bite, but rabies can also be transmitted if a rabid animal scratches a person or if its saliva is exposed to open skin.

The Health Department recommends the following steps to lower your chance of getting rabies:

- **Avoid contact with bats and all wild animals.**
- Vaccinate dogs, cats, ferrets and livestock against rabies.
- Keep your pets on a leash when outdoors.
- Contact local associations if help is needed to shelter and find homes for stray dogs and cats.
- Teach children not to go near any animals they don't know.
- Don't keep exotic or wild animals as pets.
- Keep screens in good shape and close any small openings where bats could enter.
- People traveling to developing counties where rabies is common, or who are at ongoing risk of possible rabies exposure (such as veterinarians and animal control officers) should ask their doctor about receiving pre-exposure rabies vaccinations.

If you, your family or your pets are exposed to a bat or wild animal, call your doctor right away. Also report the incident to the Health Department laboratory at 715-839-4718.



What is an exposure to rabies?



Yes. This is an exposure to rabies.

- A bite from any animal, including wild, stray or domestic pet.
- Saliva or brain tissue from an animal that gets into a scratch, wound, or mucous membrane (example: nose, eyes).



Maybe. This is a potential exposure to rabies.

- A bat in the room with an unattended child, mentally impaired person, intoxicated person, or anyone who's been sleeping.
- A bat in firewood hand-carried into the home.



No. This is not an exposure to rabies.

- A bat was flying nearby.
- A bat was seen in your attic or in a cave.

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