



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 6-9-14
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Bats test positive for rabies

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- It's early in the season, and two bats have already tested positive for rabies in the Mid-Michigan District Health Department's (MMDHD) jurisdiction, so residents should be extra cautious around the winged creatures.

Bats are the most common animal in Michigan to transmit rabies, which is fatal if left untreated. If a bat bites you or a member of your family, it's extremely important to seek medical attention right away.

According to Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for MMDHD, it can be hard to see a bat's bite marks on the skin, therefore, there are situations in which you should take action, even without an obvious bite wound. If a bat is found in the room of a sleeping person, in the room of an unattended child, or near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person, it should be treated as though a bite occurred, and you should take the following actions:

- Capture the bat: In order to be tested for rabies, a bat's head must be kept intact, so hitting it with any type of object, like a tennis racket, is not advised. The first step in safely capturing a bat is to make sure not to touch it with your bare skin (leather work gloves are ideal). Have a small box or coffee can, a piece of cardboard and tape ready. When the bat lands, approach it slowly. Place the box or can over the bat and then slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard securely to the container and contact the health department at 989-227-3111 in Clinton County, 989-875-1019 in Gratiot County, or 989-831-3615 in Montcalm County for further instructions and to discuss testing and treatment options. To see a video demonstration on safe bat capture, visit www.mmdhd.org (click on "community health" and then on "communicable disease").
- Notify MMDHD or your local health department right away, as the bat may need to be tested for rabies. The health department will tell you what further action, if any, needs to be taken.

It is important to note that:

- Bats should not be placed in the freezer.
- Residents who have captured a bat are asked to call the health department at 989-227-3111 in Clinton County, 989-875-1019 in Gratiot County or 989-831-3615 in Montcalm County to determine if it needs to be tested.
- Residents should not bring a bat to the health department without calling first.

It's a good idea to bat-proof homes by making sure to replace any loose soffits, flashings, eaves and siding. Be sure to cover roof vents with screens, make sure all doors shut tightly with no gaps, and that window screens are not damaged or torn.

Skunks, raccoons, foxes, and unvaccinated cats and dogs are also likely carriers. To help protect yourself and loved ones, avoid approaching or touching any wild or stray animal. And remember, if you are bitten by a bat or other wild or stray animal, contact your doctor immediately for treatment.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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