



Why should I learn about BATS and RABIES? Although bats play key roles in the ecosystem (through seed dispersal and pollination activities and by eating insects including agricultural pests), most of the recent human rabies cases in the United States and Canada have been caused by the rabies virus from bats. Rabies attacks the central nervous system of warm-blooded animals (mammals) including humans. It is a deadly disease that is preventable.

How can I tell if a bat has rabies? Rabies can be confirmed only in a laboratory. However, any bat that is active by day, is found in an unusual place (like a room in your home or on the lawn), or is unable to fly, is far more likely to be rabid. Such bats are often the most easily approached. Therefore, it is best never to handle any bat.

What should I do if I come in contact with a bat? If you have been in direct contact or are bitten by a bat, or if infectious matter (such as saliva) from a bat gets into your eyes, nose, mouth or a wound, wash the affected area thoroughly and get medical help immediately. Then report the incident to the Northwestern Health Unit so public health officials can take immediate steps to capture the bat, send it to a laboratory for rabies testing and control the spread of this contagious disease.

NORTHWESTERN HEALTH UNIT
Emergency After-Hours Number: 1 (807) 468-7109

People do not always know when they have been bitten by a bat because bats have small teeth which may not leave a visible mark. There are situations in which you should seek medical attention even in the absence of an obvious bite wound. For example, if you awaken and find a bat in your room or see a bat in the room of an unattended child, contact the NWHU for further risk assessment.

How can I keep bats out of my home?

Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats entry. Openings larger than one-quarter by one-half inch should be caulked. Install window screens, chimney caps and draft-guards beneath doors to attics. Fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking, and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly. Exclude bats by loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting over areas where bats are found roosting. Bats can crawl out and leave - but cannot re-enter. Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to "bat proof" your home.

How can I safely capture a bat in my home?

If a bat is in your home and you cannot rule out the possibility of exposure, leave the bat alone and contact an animal-control officer for assistance. If professional help is unavailable, follow these precautions:

- While wearing leather work gloves, place a small box or coffee can over the bat.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
- Tape the cardboard securely to the container, and punch small holes to allow the bat to breathe.
- Contact the Northwestern Health Unit to determine if rabies testing is required.



Silver-haired bats often roost in tree cavities or in bark crevices on tree trunks, especially during migration. Their unique coloration makes them difficult to find.

QUESTIONS ABOUT RABIES?
 Contact a Public Health Inspector at one of these offices:

- DRYDEN 1-888-404-4231
- KENORA 1-800-830-5978
- FORT FRANCES 1-800-461-3348