



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

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Press Release

Date: June, 12th 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Protect Yourself and Your Family from Rabies

Canton, NY— Finding a bat in your home can be a serious health risk to you and your family. The St. Lawrence County Public Health Department urges residents to be aware that bats may carry rabies and the importance of capturing any bats that may have come in contact with you, your family, or your pets for rabies testing.

Even though only a small percentage of bats are infected with rabies, they still pose a serious threat to humans and pets. The rabies virus is found in saliva, and in the brain and spinal cord fluid of an infected bat. Any physical contact with a bat such as a bite, scratch, its saliva, through contact to the eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound, or any other physical contact, is concerning. People cannot get rabies from contact with bat feces, blood, or urine.

To ensure the safety of yourself, your family, and your pets follow the **4 C's of Bats in Your Home**:

1. **Contact:** Did the bat make physical contact with you or a pet? Is there a chance an exposure would have gone undetected? For example, was a bat in the room or found on the ground next to an unattended young child/pet, a sleeping individual/pet, a person under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or a person with sensory or mental impairment? If you answered yes to any of these questions, call St. Lawrence County Public Health.
2. **Capture:** To be certain a bat does not have rabies, it must be captured and sent to a lab for rabies testing. ([See Capture a Bat Video](#))
 - Turn on room lights, close the window, and wait for bat to land.
 - Wearing heavy gloves, cover the bat with a coffee can, pail, or similar container.
 - Slide cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside and tape the cardboard to the container.
3. **Call:** Call St. Lawrence County Public Health Department at (315) 386-2325 or our after-hours number (315) 454-2363 to arrange to have the bat tested. Public Health will help determine if you, your family, or your pets are at risk for rabies and what steps you need to take next.
4. **Check:** Always call St. Lawrence County Public Health to determine if an exposure occurred or possibly occurred. Prevention of rabies is our priority. When in doubt, let us help you identify if there was an exposure and if you need to receive rabies post exposure treatment.
 - Consult with your Veterinarian regarding your pet's rabies vaccination status. Pets who are up-to-date on their rabies vaccine would receive a booster if an exposure occurred. Unvaccinated pets would need to be confined for up to 6 months if an exposure occurred.

The rabies virus infects the central nervous system. If a person does not receive the appropriate medical care after a potential rabies exposure, the virus can cause disease in the brain, ultimately resulting in

death. Rabies can be prevented by vaccinating pets, staying away from wildlife, and seeking medical care after potential exposures to bats (and other wildlife) before symptoms start. For more information contact the St. Lawrence County Public Health Department (315) 386-2325 or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>.

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