

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BATS

New Jersey is home to nine species of bats. Six species are year round residents and three species are migratory. Two species - the big brown bat and little brown bat - are often found roosting in colonies inside buildings. Other bats, called solitary bats, usually do not enter buildings.



BAT FACTS

- Bats are actually quite harmless and are an important part of the ecological balance. They play an active role in the control of nuisance insects. A single little brown bat can consume up to 1,200 mosquito sized insects in an hour and up to 3,000 insects in a single night.
- Contrary to popular belief, less than one percent of bats carry rabies and attacks by bats are extremely rare.
- Bats usually return to the same roost year after year and start maternity colonies in the spring. The young are born in June and July. Colonies can be present at the same location for over 100 years. Bats hibernate over winter.

HOW DO YOU GET RID OF BATS YOUR HOME?

The only permanent method to get rid of bats from a home and keep them out is to exclude them by bat-proofing. There are no chemicals registered in New Jersey for killing bats. Use of unregistered pesticides only increases the chances that children or pets will come into contact with sick bats.

Bats often roost in dark, undisturbed areas like attics and wall spaces. The entry points are often near the roof edge - under the eaves, soffits or loose boards, openings in the roof or vents, or crevices around the chimney. Sometimes bats will roost behind shutters or under boards without entering the home. The objective is to seal off all actual (and potential) bat entry points without trapping any bats inside the roost.

BAT-PROOF YOUR HOME

Bats are able to squeeze through openings as small as 3/8 inch wide. To confirm their presence and locate the openings used by bats in the warmer months, observe the building from the outside for bats leaving in the evening from 1/2 hour before until 1/2 hour after sundown.

- Seal the openings one evening after all the bats have been observed and counted while leaving. Do NOT seal openings in June or July when immature bats are still too young to fly and remain inside buildings at all times.
- The ideal time to seal the openings is between November 15 and March 15 since most bats will have left the roost to hibernate elsewhere.
- Because bats cannot gnaw to enlarge an existing opening, you can seal an opening with 1/4 inch hardware cloth, fly screen, sheet metal, wood, caulking, expandable polyurethane foam or fiberglass insulation.

- Occasionally, bats enter rooms in homes from their roost area in the attic or wall spaces. Interior bat-proofing such as sealing spaces around the attic door, caulking, flashing, weather stripping, or use of draft guards beneath doors prevent the bats from accidentally entering living areas of the home until the bats can be excluded from the entire structure. Because fiberglass insulation is repellent to bats, insulating walls and attic have a dual purpose of energy conservation and bat control.
- Some private wildlife removal specialists and pest control companies provide permanent bat exclusion services for homeowners unable to complete the work themselves.

WHAT IF YOU MAY HAVE HAD CONTACT WITH A BAT?

Bats are not normally aggressive animals. However, caution should be used to avoid direct contact, even with apparently healthy bats.

While less than one percent of bats carry rabies, bats have been the source of the majority of the few human rabies cases in the United States. In some of these cases, rabies transmission occurred even after limited contact with a bat. Because bat bites may be less severe and heal rapidly, they are more difficult to find or recognize than bites from larger mammals.

Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP / preventive treatment) should be considered for any physical contact with bats when bites, scratches or mucous membrane contact with saliva **cannot be excluded**. Just being in close proximity to a rabid bat is not considered an exposure, and in general PEP is not specifically recommended for other household members who were not in the same room with the bat.

If you are absolutely sure there has been no human or animal contact with the bat, try to confine the bat in one room, turn on the lights, and open the windows. Because bats are able to detect air currents, they will usually leave at their normal time of activity in the early evening.

If you are bitten, or scratched OR the possibility of contact cannot be excluded, try to capture the bat. Care should be taken to avoid damage to the head during capture, as the brain may need to be submitted to the State Rabies Laboratory for testing.

CAPTURING THE BAT

1. Put on leather work gloves
2. Place a box or can over the bat
3. Slide cardboard under the box or can to trap the bat inside
4. Tape the cardboard to the box or can securely
5. Punch small air holes in the top



Immediately clean the wound thoroughly with soap and water, and seek prompt medical attention from your health care provider or hospital emergency room. Report the bite or other exposure to your local health department as soon as possible and to arrange for rabies testing at the State Rabies Laboratory.

The procedure is the same for an animal exposure to a bat. The greatest preventive measure is to have your dog or cat vaccinated against rabies **before** any exposure to a rabid animal.

RABIES FACTS

- Rabies is found in the saliva of infected warm blooded animals. The most common wild carriers are the raccoon, skunk, fox and bat. Cats are the most common domestic animal to be infected with rabies.
- Rabid animals are usually either vicious and aggressive, or may appear to be drunk and have trouble walking. Some animals may be rabid even though they appear to be normal. Stay away from all wild and stray animals which are aggressive or appear to be sick.
- Never touch a wild animal, even if it is dead or injured.
- Leave wildlife alone. Do not make pets of wild animals or try to “save” baby animals even if they seem abandoned.
- Do not feed or pet stray animals.
- Pets can get rabies so have your dogs and cats vaccinated. Free walk-in Rabies Clinics are offered by the Health Department - call (609) 936-8400 for dates and locations.
- All dogs and cats seven months or older must be licensed. Dog licenses must be renewed in January and cat licenses must be renewed in April. Proof of rabies vaccination is required. Fees are lower for spayed or neutered animals. Licenses can be obtained at the Health Department during regular office hours.
- If you are bitten by a dog, cat or other domestic animal obtain information about the pet, including owner’s name, phone number, address, description of the animal and its rabies vaccination status. The local health department will issue a 10 day observation order for the biting animal to ensure that it is free of rabies. If the animal shows signs of rabies, it should be euthanized immediately and tested. If the animal dies during the observation period, it must be submitted for testing.
- If you are bitten by a wild animal try to contain the animal while being careful to prevent additional bites or exposure to saliva. Contact the animal control officer or local police for assistance. Care should be taken to avoid damage to the head during capture, as the brain may need to be submitted for testing.
- If you are bitten by any animal immediately wash the bite thoroughly with soap and water. Call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room.
- PROTECT YOURSELF! Because rabies is a fatal disease once symptoms appear, **report** all animal-to-animal and animal-to-human bites to the Health Department at (609) 936-8400.



WEST WINDSOR HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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