



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Hot Weather, Bugs and Open Doors May Explain Bats

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Media Contact: Communication Office
Vermont Department of Health
802-863-7281

BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health has noted an increase in the number of people who are reporting bats (mostly big brown bats) flying through open windows and doors and getting trapped inside homes and camps this summer.

The Health Department recommends if a bat is found in a room with someone who was sleeping soundly, or if a bat is found in the same room as an unattended child, safely collect the bat for rabies testing. Call the rabies hotline (800-472-2437) for help on determining if a worrisome exposure occurred.

“The string of hot weather, bugs, and open doors and windows might explain what we are seeing,” said Robert Johnson, public health veterinarian. “Bats are an important part of the ecosystem, but we don’t want people sharing a room with them overnight without knowing they are negative for rabies.”

Only four of the 65 bats tested so far this year have been positive for rabies, but because rabies can be fatal if not treated, it is important to have the bat tested if an exposure could have occurred.

Rabies is found mainly in wildlife (especially raccoons, foxes, bats, and skunks) and can infect domestic animals and humans. There has never been a human case of rabies reported to the Vermont Department of Health, but people can become infected if bitten or scratched by an infected animal. It is important to avoid handling wildlife, especially animals that may be infected with rabies.

If a person is exposed, anti-rabies shots to fight off the disease need to be given as soon as possible after a bite has occurred, before symptoms appear.

A total of 31 animals have tested positive for rabies so far in 2012.

For more information on rabies prevention efforts and how to safely collect a bat for testing visit:
<http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/rabies/Rabies.aspx>.

To call the rabies hotline from an out-of-state phone dial: 802-223-8697

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Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374
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