



Clinton County Health Department

133 Margaret Street, Plattsburgh, New York 12901-2926

“Working Together for a Healthier Community”

www.clintonhealth.org



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Administration Division

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News Release

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For Immediate Release
Contact: 518-565-4840

Importance of Capturing Bats Found in Homes

The Clinton County Health Department is advising residents to capture any bats that come in contact with humans or pets. Most bats found indoors should be captured and tested for rabies.

Rabies is a fatal viral infection transmitted through an infected animal’s saliva. It is spread to people and pets when they are bitten by an infected animal. If you see a bat enter your home, open windows so the bat can escape. However, if you don’t know how or when the bat got in, capture the bat. Unless you saw the bat enter the home, it can be difficult to know if the bat came in contact with a person or pet. A person can be bitten by a bat or exposed to its saliva and not know it. Bats have small sharp teeth, which may not leave a visible bite mark, and a bite from a bat during the night may not awaken a sleeping person.

If you find a bat in your home or camp, and are unsure about whether anyone has come in contact with it, capture the bat without damaging the head and contact your health department. In Clinton County, call 518-565-4870. For a quick video on how to properly capture a bat visit: www.clintonhealth.org/batproofing.

Use caution when capturing a bat.

- Close doors, windows and closet doors to keep the bat in the room.
- Turn on the lights if the room is dark.
- Wear gloves (heavy, preferably pliable thick leather) and wait for the bat to land.
- Cover the bat with a coffee can or similar container with a lid.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the can, trapping the bat.
- With one hand firmly holding the cardboard in place against the top of the can, turn the can right side up.
- Replace the cardboard with the lid (if no lid, tape the cardboard tightly to the can).
- **Call your local health department. In Clinton County, call 518-565-4870.**

If a bat is found in a room with person who is sleeping and the bat is released, the person will be advised to undergo rabies post-exposure treatment. This may also apply if the bat is found in a room with an unattended child, someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or someone with a mental disability. Most bats do not have rabies, but if a bat is released and not available for testing, it has to be assumed that it may have been rabid. You cannot tell if a bat has rabies by looking at it or by the way it acts. The only way to know if an animal has rabies is to send it for testing. For post-exposure treatment to be effective, it must be started BEFORE a person experiences symptoms of rabies.

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“Persons who have any physical mobility or other needs, call the telephone number above to arrange for accommodations”

So far in 2019, the Clinton County Health Department has authorized post-exposure treatment for 40 people. Many of these authorizations were a result of not capturing the bat. “We cannot stress the importance of capturing the bat enough,” states Amanda Finckel, Senior Sanitarian for the Department’s Division of Environmental Health and Safety.

To keep bats out of your home, look for holes that might allow bats to enter and seal any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch. Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics, and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.

Avoid doing bat-proofing from May through August. If there are young bats in your attic, many of them can’t fly and keeping the adults out will trap the young who will die or try to make their way into your rooms.

Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to bat-proof your home.

In addition to bat-proofing, it is important to remember that pets, including indoor cats, must be vaccinated against rabies. New York State Public Health Law requires all dogs, cats and ferrets over four months old to be vaccinated. Vaccination of pets is one of the best ways to protect your family from rabies. Rabies clinics for the remainder of 2019 will be held on the dates and at the locations listed below from 6:00pm - 8:30pm.

- September 17, 2019 – Peru Volunteer Fire Department
- September 19, 2019 – Champlain Volunteer Fire Department
- September 24, 2019 – Beekmantown Town Garage
- September 26, 2019 – Black Brook Town Garage
- December 3, 2019 – City of Plattsburgh Public Works

For more information on rabies visit www.cdc.gov/rabies.

About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department’s Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at www.clintonhealth.org or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), Twitter (@ClintonCountyHD), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).

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