



Clinton County Health Department

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“Working Together for a Healthier Community”

www.clintonhealth.org



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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News Release

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Contact: 518-565-4840

CCHD Asks Residents to Safely Capture Bats Found in Homes

Plattsburgh, August 17, 2022. The Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) is advising residents to capture any bats that come in contact with humans or pets. In most cases, bats need to 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, you can open windows so the bat can escape,” explained Amanda Finckel, Senior Public Health Sanitarian at CCHD. “However, if you didn’t see the bat enter, it can be difficult to know if the bat came in contact with a person or pet. Bats can squeeze through very small spaces (1/2 inch thick) and are one of the few wild animals that successfully enter our homes - potentially bringing the rabies virus with them.”

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. 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.

“Though most bats do not have rabies, the virus is definitely present in some of Clinton County’s bat population,” explained Ms. Finckel. “If a bat is released and not available for testing, we have to assume that it may have been rabid and treat any person or pet who may have been exposed with a post-exposure treatment.”

“For post-exposure treatment to be effective, it must be started before a person experiences symptoms of rabies,” added Ms. Finckel. “We cannot stress enough the importance of capturing the bat.”

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.



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

- While 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.

In addition to rooms with a person who is sleeping, bats found in a room with an unattended child, someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or someone with a mental disability should also be captured. They might not be able to accurately report if they came into contact with the bat or not.

Residents are encouraged to be proactive and take steps to keep bats out of their homes. Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to bat-proof 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 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.

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. "Vaccinating your pets is one of the best ways to protect your family from rabies," urged Ms. Finckel. "CCHD offers free vaccine clinics several times each year. To see upcoming clinics visit www.clintonhealth.org/rabiesclinics."

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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