



Public Health
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Frederick County Health Department

News Release

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THE FREDERICK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO REMIND PEOPLE WHAT TO DO IF THEY FIND A BAT IN THEIR HOME

FREDERICK, MD – The Frederick County Health Department would like to make the public aware that bats have been found in local residences. Several of these bats have tested positive for rabies. It is important for individuals to know what to do if they have a bat inside their home – dead or alive.

Bats are one of Maryland's most valuable resources. They are mammals that fly. There are many different species of bats in Maryland. Bats are the primary consumer of night-time flying insects. They eat hundreds of different insect pests, including mosquitoes which can carry diseases. A brown bat, common to Maryland, can eat approximately 1,200 mosquito-size insects per hour. Many of the pests that the agricultural community and general public try to control with insecticides are eaten by bats.

Unfortunately, bats are often misunderstood according to the Maryland Cooperative Extension of the University of Maryland. Bats are often portrayed as creatures that intend to harm their victims infecting them with rabies. The rate of rabies in bats is considered to be half of one percent. Therefore, most bats do not have rabies. Other mammals that can have rabies include raccoons (the most common in Maryland), as well as foxes, dogs, cats, and ferrets.

Rabies is a virus that affects the nervous system. Rabies is preventable with proper early treatment, but is almost always fatal once symptoms appear. Animals that have rabies

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spread the virus to humans through a bite, scratch or any manner in which saliva of the infected animal enters the human body. Animals with rabies do not always act aggressive or froth at the mouth. Some rabid animals act very docile and may have difficulty standing, walking, or flying-in the case of bats. It is important to remember that a wild animal should never want to come close to humans. Pets including dogs, cats and ferrets should be vaccinated for rabies as they could have interactions with wild animals. The Frederick County Health Department's Division of Environmental Health Services offers reduced cost animal rabies vaccination clinics throughout the year at various locations in the county. Clinics will be held Thursday August 27 at the Ballenger Creek Park and Thursday, September 3 at the Thurmont Community Park from 5 – 8 pm. For more information about animal rabies vaccination clinics call 301-600-1717.

Some bats migrate in colder months while others hibernate in tree cavities, attics, and other structures. Most colonizing bat species will roost in man-made structures such as attics, behind shutters, under shingles, eaves, in chimneys, barns or any other suitable roosting sites. Bats sometimes have two roosting sites within the same structure or within two different structures that are close to each other. One roosting site can be located in the area of the attic that has the highest temperature for hibernation (the sunny side). The other roosting site can be located in an area that has a cooler temperature (to cool off in the summer).

If you find a bat flying in your home try to contain the bat in the room. Close windows and doors to that room and do not let the bat leave the home. Do not try to capture or kill the bat. Contact Frederick County Animal Control at 301-600-1544 to have the bat removed safely from your home and submitted for testing to determine if the bat has rabies. This will be very important in determining if you and/or your family will need to receive treatment for rabies exposure. It is almost impossible to know if you have been bitten by a bat especially if you wake up to a bat in your room. Even if a dead bat is found in your home, contact Animal Control to have the bat removed and tested.

During 2014, 344 animals tested positive for rabies in Maryland, of which 79 were bats and 192 were raccoons. During 2014 Frederick County had 35 animals test positive for rabies, of which 2 were bats and 22 were raccoons. So far for 2015, 155 animals tested positive for rabies in Maryland, of which 33 were bats and 94 were raccoons. So far in Frederick County during 2015, 27 animals have tested positive for rabies which includes 4 bats and 19 raccoons. We have seen the number of bats testing positive for rabies double so far this year from the previous year.

If it is determined that you could have been exposed to a rabid bat the treatment is administered at a hospital emergency department. Preventive treatment for rabies exposure is urgent however it is not an emergency. Healthcare providers at the emergency department will evaluate the exposure, provide care for the bite or scratch, and administer

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rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) which consists of rabies immune globulin that provides immediate antibody protection, and 4 vaccines administered over a 14 day period, which provides longer lasting immunity. Rabies PEP should be started as soon as possible after an exposure to be effective, and all 4 vaccines must be received. If not, an individual is at risk of developing rabies. Symptoms of rabies in humans can include fever, headaches, unusual tingling sensation, confusion, hydrophobia (fear of water), and seizures. The disease rapidly progresses to paralysis, coma, and death.

If you think you have had contact with a bat in the last 6 months or have questions regarding rabies you can speak with your healthcare provider or a nurse at the Frederick County Health Department by calling 301-600-3342. For questions regarding how to determine if you have bats living in your home, to learn how to prevent bats from entering your home, and how to have bats properly removed from your home contact the Nuisance Wildlife Hotline at 877-463-6497.

Information can also be obtained at the following websites:

- Frederick County Health Department – www.frederickcountymd.gov/health
- Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene Rabies Information – <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OIDEOR/CZVBD/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Department of Natural Resources – <http://dnr2.maryland.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) – www.cdc.gov/rabies
- University of Maryland – Maryland Cooperative Extension: www.extension.umd.edu

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