

City of Newton



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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT WARNS ABOUT BATS ENTERING HOMES

Hot August days are sending bats that normally live in house attics into cooler spaces. If a person or pet may have had contact with a bat, it is important to capture the bat for rabies testing.

Bats sometimes carry rabies and may spread it to people or animals through a bite or scratch. Rabies is a deadly disease, so it is important to be proactive.

“There’s no way to tell if a sleeping person, pet or young child has been bitten or scratched by a rabid bat because the wound is small,” said Linda Walsh, Newton’s Interim Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

Bats found in homes should be tested if the bat was with an unattended child, someone sleeping, intoxicated, or with a mental impairment, or a pet.

If the bat tests negative for rabies, no treatment is needed. If the bat tests positive, the exposed person must have a series of anti-rabies shots. If a bat is not available to be tested and a person was potentially exposed, he or she must also have the anti-rabies shots.

Bats are tested at Massachusetts Department of Public Health laboratory in Jamaica Plain. Five percent of bats tested last year were positive for rabies.

“While the percentage is low, the disease is so serious that we are exceedingly cautious about possible exposure,” Walsh said.

If a resident is able to catch a bat that has entered a house, they should take the following steps:

- Wait until the bat has come to rest, wear heavy gloves to capture the bat in a jar, coffee can, plastic or other hard container.
- The container should be marked with the name, address and responsible person.
- Mark the container “live bat” if it is still alive.
- Dead bats should be placed in the refrigerator, but not the freezer.
- Bats should be brought to the Department of Health and Human Services at 1294 Centre Street in Newton Centre.

If a resident is unable to capture the bat, they should call the Animal Control at the Newton Police Department at 617-796-2109. Additionally, there are private services that capture bats that are listed in the phone book under “Pest Control Services.” Such services also can remove existing colonies and bat-proof houses.

More information is available by calling 617-796-1420 or visiting www.newtonma.gov.

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