



**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essex County Health Department Issues Indoor Bat Guidance as Summer Calls Increase

Elizabethtown, NY. The Essex County Health Department is reminding residents that if you find a bat in your home, do not let it outside. If there is any chance of human or pet exposure, the bat should be safely captured and saved for rabies testing. The Essex County Health Department is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to potential rabies exposures at 518-873-3500. After normal business hours, callers are still able to connect with on-call public health staff for timely guidance and assistance.

Capturing the bat is important because rabies testing can determine whether rabies post-exposure treatment is necessary. If the bat tests negative for rabies, treatment can often be avoided.

New York State rabies guidance deems any encounter with a bat where a bite cannot be ruled out as an exposure. This includes bats found in the same room as a sleeping, intoxicated, or mentally compromised person or unattended child. If the bat tests positive for rabies, or if the bat is let outside or escapes, a multi-dose treatment is recommended for those meeting any of the exposure scenarios. Any direct physical contact with a bat is also considered an exposure that warrants evaluation and treatment if the bat is unavailable for testing.

If you find a bat (dead or alive):

- If/when it is safe to do so, confine it to the room where it was discovered and wait for it to land.
- Wearing thick gloves, cover the bat with a small container, such as a coffee can or piece of Tupperware.
- Slide a lid or a piece of cardboard under the container and secure with tape to prevent escape.
- Call ECHD immediately 518-873-3500 for further instructions, even if the bat escapes or cannot be located.
- These steps can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/_YhnV5WJQBA?si=C0NzIMePydARKsmx

"While most bats do not have rabies, every potential bat exposure should be evaluated because bat bites can be tiny, painless, and go unnoticed" said Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for the Essex County Health Department. "If there is any chance a person or pet was exposed, call our trained staff to determine next steps. We often recommend capturing the bat for testing to help determine whether rabies treatment is needed. A negative test result can prevent unnecessary post-exposure treatment."

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