



Serving Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet & Otsego Counties

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For Immediate Release

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Rabies Awareness: What to Know About Bat Encounters
HDNW confirms rabies case in Northwest Michigan

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) was notified on Thursday that a bat collected in Emmet County has tested positive for rabies. There have been no human cases of rabies associated with this incident.

“Typically, less than 1% of wild bats in Michigan carry rabies,” says Dr. Josh Meyerson, HDNW Medical Director. “While the infection rate is low, bats are the primary source of rabies in the state, making up about 90% of all reported animal rabies cases. If you believe you or a family member may have been exposed to a bat, it's important to have the bat tested whenever possible. Prompt testing can help determine whether preventive treatment is needed.”

Defining an Exposure

Bat bites and scratches can be small and difficult to detect, and an exposure may have occurred if a bat is found:

- In a room with a sleeping person
- Near an unsupervised child
- With a person who is mentally impaired or intoxicated
- In direct contact with a pet or person

If any of these situations occur, **do not release the bat**. Keeping the bat for testing may prevent unnecessary rabies treatment. Although rabies is nearly always fatal once symptoms appear, it is entirely preventable with prompt medical care after an exposure.

How to Safely Capture a Bat

If you believe a bat may have exposed a person or pet, safely capture it by following these tips:

- Put on thick leather gloves or work gloves
- Wait for the bat to land
- Place a plastic container or coffee can over the bat
- Slide a piece of cardboard or stiff paper underneath
- Secure/tape the cardboard to the container
- Avoid touching the bat with bare hands

Bringing a Bat in for Testing

Bats submitted for rabies testing must be humanely euthanized before being brought into a HDNW clinic location. To ensure accurate testing the bat's head must remain intact and undamaged, keep the bat refrigerated until it can be dropped off, never freeze it. Bring the euthanized bat to any HDNW clinic location as soon as possible.

For more information on rabies visit our website at nwhealth.org. For more information on services offered at HDNW call us locally at 800-432-4121. To stay updated on the most recent local health information, consider subscribing to our newsletter [here](#).

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