

## NEWS RELEASE

### Public Health - Madison & Dane County

(PHMDC)

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#### There's a Bat in my Bedroom: What shall I do?

#### Following your Instincts may be a Risky Choice

Madison WI – August 13, 2015 – Bats are actually wonderful creatures and are very important to our natural environment and ecosystem (eating 4,500 bugs including mosquitoes every night). They do not seem quite as wonderful when they show up in our homes. Bats tend to show up indoors more often at this time of year because young bats born in the spring are now old enough to take to the air in search of food **and new places to live**.

Finding a live or even a dead bat in your bedroom can be upsetting. It can also present a serious risk to your health because bats can be infected with rabies. While only a very small percentage of bats actually carry rabies, the consequences of actual rabies exposure can be catastrophic because an untreated rabies infection is almost always fatal. However, bats are the primary carriers of rabies in Wisconsin, although so far this year only 2 bats tested positive for rabies in Dane County and 7 have tested positive state-wide.

Here are some tips on how to safely manage things when a bat gets into your living space.

If you find a bat dead or alive in your home, especially in your bedroom in the morning, there is a possibility that you could have been bitten while you were asleep. This risk applies to anyone sleeping in the area, including an infant or a pet. Even though all your instincts may tell you to shoo the live bat out, or toss the dead bat in the trash, **THIS IS ACTUALLY A VERY BAD IDEA!** Following are some examples to consider:

1. With no bat to test it's impossible to know if you or a loved one was exposed to rabies. (The probability is low but the risk is high)
2. Bat bites are often hard to notice
3. The only way to properly evaluate your exposure risk is to have the bat tested in a lab
4. If the test is negative, you are in the clear
5. If the result is positive **or if the bat is unavailable for testing** you will need to undergo rabies vaccination.

If you find a dead bat, use a paper towel or disposable rubber gloves and carefully place it in a container (cottage cheese type container) and put it in the fridge for safe keeping. Call Public

Health - Animal Services at (608) 255-2345 and they will pick up the bat and transport it to the lab.

If you find a live bat, try to catch it safely. Be extremely careful when attempting to catch the bat to avoid being bitten. The most common method of capture is to wait until the bat lands on a wall or other surface, then place an empty cottage cheese or other container over it, slide the cover under and secure it. Some people use a broom or tennis racket to knock the bat out of the air and then capture it. Once safely captured, keep the bat in the room with the doors and windows closed. Be sure to not let it escape or set it free.

If you wind up having to kill the bat, be careful not to damage the bat's head since the brain needs to be intact for proper testing. Put the container with the bat in it in the fridge to help conserve the tissues that need to be analyzed. Then call Animal Services at the number above for pick up. Animal Services may also be able to help you capture the live bat if you are having trouble doing it yourself.

If you find a bat outside or in a closed off area of the home or workplace that DID NOT have access to a sleeping person or pet there is no need for a rabies test. You can either leave the bat alone or release it outside. If you have any questions about such a situation, contact Animal Services.

More detailed information on bats and rabies can be found at:  
[www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental/animal/rabies.cfm](http://www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental/animal/rabies.cfm)  
and at [www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/education/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/education/index.html)

For information on the good that bats can do and the importance of bat conservation, see [www.batcow.org/](http://www.batcow.org/).

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An online version of this release is available at <http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/theres-a-bat-in-my-bedroom-what-shall-i-do>