

Bats & Rabies

How do I get rid of bats roosting in the attic?

Cover outside entry points to prevent bats from returning, but wait until the young can fly (September or later).

- Watch where the bats exit at dusk.
- Cover these areas with loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting. Bats will be able to crawl out and leave, but cannot re-enter.
- Once you are sure that all bats have left the building, permanently seal the openings.

What time of year is best for bat proofing?

Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so late fall through early spring are the best times to bat-proof your home or cottage.

During summer, young bats can't fly. If you prevent adult bats from returning to their roost from May to August, the young may be trapped inside. They may die or find their way into your living quarters. Wait until September, after the young are flying, to block bats from entering your home or cottage.

Is there a safe way to remove a bat from my home?

If you find a bat in your home or cottage and no one has been in contact with it, safely encourage it to leave.

- Remove everyone from the room.
- Open windows and doors that lead outside.
- Turn the lights off.
- Leave the room and close the door.

The bat should leave on its own at dusk.

What can I do to prevent rabies?

- Teach children never to handle animals they don't know, even if the animal appears friendly. This includes pets, farm animals, and wild animals. "Love your own, leave other animals alone" is a good safety rule.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, cottages, churches, schools, and other areas where they might have contact with people or pets.

Learn more about bats

To learn more about bats, bat-proofing, and the risks and benefits of bats, visit these websites:

- batcon.org/ click on link "Bats & People"
- novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/nuisance/bats.asp
- cdc.gov/rabies/bats/index.html

Learn more about rabies

Contact your local Public Health office or the provincial Department of Natural Resources, or visit the Nova Scotia Health and Wellness website at novascotia.ca/dhw/CDPC/rabies.asp

Public Health Offices:

Amherst	667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
Antigonish	867-4500 Ext 4800
Bridgewater	543-0850
Dartmouth	481-5800
New Glasgow	752-5151
Sydney	563-2400
Truro	893-5820
Wolfville	542-6310
Yarmouth	742-7141

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06053/MAY15 REV15-16



Why should I care about bats?

Bats are an important part of our environment and there are many reasons to appreciate them:

- Bats can eat their weight in insects every night. They are a major predator of night-flying insects, including pests that cost farmers billions of dollars each year.
- In the tropics, bats play a vital role in rain forest survival, spreading seeds and pollinating plants.
- Studies of bats have led to medical advances, including aids to help the blind.

Never kill a bat needlessly. Human activity has already destroyed many local populations of bats and many species are endangered.

What is rabies?

Rabies is a disease that can be passed to humans from other mammals. In Canada, rabies is rare in humans, but it is very serious. If rabies is not treated, it is almost always fatal. Between 1998 and 2012, three people have died of rabies in Canada.

What causes rabies?

A virus that lives in saliva and brain tissue causes rabies. The rabies virus can affect any mammal—humans, pets, farm animals, and wild animals.

The most common way to get rabies is by being bitten by an infected animal. It is also possible to get the virus if saliva or brain tissue from an infected animal enters through the eyes, nose, mouth or broken skin.

You **cannot** catch rabies:

- Through contact with blood, feces (poop), or urine (pee)
- By being sprayed by a skunk
- By touching the fur of an infected animal
- By seeing a bat in your home or in a cave

Do bats carry rabies?

Yes. Infected bats seem to be the source of all rabies cases in Nova Scotia. This means that any animal with rabies was likely bitten by an infected bat.

Across Canada, about 255 animals are found to have rabies each year. Most of these are wild animals, mainly bats, skunks, raccoons, and foxes. Some are farm animals, mostly cows and horses. Some are pets, especially cats and dogs. Rarely, small rodents and rabbits get rabies but we have no evidence that they ever pass it to humans.

How can I tell if a bat has rabies?

The only way to confirm that a bat has rabies is through a laboratory test.

However, some signs that a bat might be infected are:

- The bat is active during the day.
- The bat is in an unusual place—for example, on the lawn.
- The bat is unable to fly.

These bats may be easy to get close to but it is safest to never touch a bat.

What should I do if my pet comes into contact with a bat?

Contact a veterinarian if you think your pet has been bitten by a bat. Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for cats, dogs, and other animals.

What should I do if I come in contact with a bat?

Did the bat land on you or touch you? A bite may leave small marks that are hard to see, but you can only be bitten if the bat has landed on you or touched you.

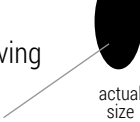
If a bat bites you or if you get saliva or brain tissue from a bat in your eyes, nose, or mouth, or in a wound:

- Wash the affected area well.
- Contact your local Public Health office right away.

How can I bat-proof my home or cottage?

You can bat-proof your home yourself or hire a private pest control service to do it for you.

To bat-proof your home or cottage:

- Carefully check your house for holes that might allow bats to enter your living quarters. Caulk any openings larger than $\frac{1}{4}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (0.5 by 1.0 cm) 
- Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft guards beneath doors to attics.
- Fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking.
- Make sure that all doors to the outside close tightly.

Some bats live in buildings. If there is little chance that they will come into contact with people, there's no reason to evict them. However, you should always prevent bats from entering your living quarters.

For more information see: novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/nuisance/bats.asp