

Bats in Camp Policy

Background

Finding bats in cabins and other camp buildings is a common occurrence. Bats are active eating insects in the summer months and are an important part of our Minnesota environment. However, sometimes they end up roosting or flying into camp buildings. Bats are experts at squeezing into small gaps in buildings and summer-only buildings are more likely to have these gaps.

Bats in camps are a concern because a small percentage (~3.5%) of bats in Minnesota carry rabies. Rabies is a fatal neurologic illness, which bats can transmit to people through bites. Since these bites are very tiny and might go unnoticed, any direct physical contact with a bat, or waking up to a bat in the room where a person is sleeping are considered potential rabies exposures. Simply being in a room with a bat while awake and alert is not a rabies exposure.

This policy outlines what should happen if a bat is found at _____ and was developed in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). It reflects both state and national best practices.

Who is covered by this policy?

All campers, staff, volunteers, and visitors. Staff should review this policy during yearly training or orientation.

Bat Scenarios

Finding a dead bat in a camp building

- Call MDH at 651-201-5414; these are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Any direct physical contact with a bat

- Capture the bat and submit it for rabies testing (see Capture a Bat section below).
 - Wait for test results before anyone starts rabies shots.
- If the bat is not available for rabies testing, then any person who had direct physical contact with the bat is recommended to receive rabies shots. This is an urgent matter but not an emergency; there is no specific window of time for a person to start rabies shots after an exposure.
 - If the direct contact was with a person's head or neck this may be more urgent. Consult with MDH at 651-201-5414.

Wake-up to bat in a sleeping area

- Capture the bat and submit it for rabies testing.
 - Wait for test results before anyone starts rabies shots.

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- If the bat is not available for rabies testing, then use the attached worksheet to collect basic information about the situation and call MDH at 651-201-5414 to consult on how to coordinate medical care and messaging to families.

Bats in a non-sleeping area (dining room, etc.), bats in a sleeping area during non-sleeping times (cabin during the day), or outside (such as on a hiking trail)

- Make a list of people present and assess exposures. If there was:
 - No contact – then no need to test the bat and it is okay to release the bat.
 - Physical contact – then capture the bat for rabies testing and wait for results. If the bat is gone, call MDH at 651-201-5414 to consult on next steps.

How to capture a bat safely

- Please see attached How to Capture a Bat comic.
- View the How to Capture a Bat Safely Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNw6hkFetOk>
- Each sleeping area should have a bat capture kit that includes:
 - Hard-sided container with lid – be sure to make small air holes (1/8 inch or smaller)
 - Tape
 - Leather gloves
 - Long handled net, such as a butterfly net
 - How to Capture a Bat comic for quick reference
- Additional kits may be kept in central locations.

How to test the bat

- Once the bat is captured, keep it in a cool, dark place.
- It may be helpful to contact your local veterinary clinic ahead of the summer season and arrange for bat euthanasia and shipping services if needed. Alternatively, contact the most convenient veterinary diagnostic lab (listed below) in order to get driving or shipping directions.
- Where to send the bat for testing:
 - University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (UMN VDL) *preferred lab*
1333 Gortner Ave
St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: 612-625-8787
 - North Dakota State University Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (NDSU VDL)
4035 19th Ave N
Fargo, ND 58102
Phone: 701-231-8307
 - Animal Disease Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (SDSU VDL)
Box 2175, 1155 North Campus Dr.
South Dakota State University Veterinary
Brookings, SD 57007
Phone: 605-688-5171

How to get rabies test results

- If you submitted the bat to the UMN VDL, then results for specimens received before 11:00 a.m. will be available the next business day by 2 p.m. Results for specimens received after 11:00 a.m. will be available in two business days.
- If the bat tests positive or is not testable then MDH will call you ASAP to provide guidance.
- If the bat tests negative then the UMN VDL will send you results via mail and/or fax.
- If you submitted the bat to NDSU or SDSU then call MDH at 651-201-5414 for results.

Minnesota Department of Health
651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.