



Renfrew County and District Health Unit
"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

For Immediate Release

(Pembroke, Ontario, August 12, 2019)

Rabies and Bat Awareness

Rabies is still a concern to public health. This virus is transmitted through the saliva of an infected animal; which attacks the central nervous system causing involuntary muscle spasms. If left untreated the virus will cause death.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) investigates approximately 300 animal bites per year. Renfrew County and District has not had a human confirmed case of rabies for several decades.

What you can do to protect your family and pets from rabies:

- Have your pets vaccinated according to instructions from your veterinarian. It is the law!
- Do not feed wild animals.
- Warn your children to stay away from wild or stray animals and pets they do not know.
- Do not attempt to trap wild animals that are causing damage to your property. Instead, contact a professional animal control officer to remove nuisance animals.
- Do not trap and transport wild animals to a new location.
- Take measures to discourage wild animals from taking up residence in your home or on your property by;
 - keeping pet food dishes indoors,
 - put garbage out on the day of collection in a pest proof container with a properly sealing lid,
 - close off entrances to all structures on your property.
- Do not keep wild animals as pets.
- Report any animals behaving strangely to your municipal animal control office or Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Bats

Bats are nocturnal animals and are most active following sunset for two or three hours. Bats eat about three times their body weight each day and are efficient insect controllers.

Typically, bats have their babies in June and by August many of their young are looking for their own roosting sites. Many will roost and hibernate in attics. Although bats are beneficial, they can carry diseases such as rabies and histoplasmosis, which can affect humans and animals. They may also transmit distemper and mange to household pets. The most common signs of rabies in bats are the inability to fly and resting in unusual places such as the ground or floor.

RCDHU has submitted 13 bats for rabies testing in last 5 years; that were provided by the residents of Renfrew County and District. All of these bats have tested negative for rabies. It is important to remember many of the bats that get into our homes are healthy bats and are looking for a way out.

Bat Encounters

If you find a bat in your home and are absolutely sure that there was no human or animal contact, try to confine the bat to one room; open a window or door to the outside, turn out the lights and close the door of the room with the bat inside. The bat should fly out in the early evening.

If contact with a bat has occurred seek medical attention/advice immediately. Should you find a bat in your home and are unsure if it has bitten a family member, contact your Health Care Provider or RCDHU to determine if treatment is required.

If you have to pick up a dead bat, be sure to wear gloves. Place the bat in a suitable hard sided container with lid (i.e. margarine container, Mason jar, Tupperware container, etc.). When the container is sealed remove gloves, then wash your hands with soap and water. RCDHU will accept bats for analysis that have come in contact with humans provided the bat is dead.

Bat-Proofing Your Home

Avoid bats from taking residence in your house by bat-proofing the exterior of your house. It is advisable to contact a pest management company or a wildlife conservation agency for assistance with bat-proofing your home.

Animal Bites

All animal bites domestic or wild must be reported to your local health unit. These reports are investigated to determine risk to public health. After an animal bite wash the site with soap and warm water then seek medical attention. For information on what to do if you are exposed to rabies visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/rabies-humans#section-1>.

For more information contact your Renfrew County and District Health Unit.

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