

For Immediate Release

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Two Rabid Bats Found in Washtenaw County
Remember to 'check it out before you let it out'

YPSILANTI, Mich., May 31, 2018 – Two rabid bats have been found in Washtenaw County so far in 2018. The Washtenaw County Health Department is reminding residents to report any bat exposures or animal bites to 734-544-6700 before letting the animal go.

“We typically see a couple rabid bats in the county each year,” says Judy Gwozdek, communicable disease coordinator at the Washtenaw County Health Department. “Bat encounters tend to increase in the summer and fall months. Our public health nurses are available to talk through each situation and determine if there was any risk of exposure to rabies. This is critical, because rabies is almost always fatal if not prevented with post-exposure vaccination.”

The two rabid bats identified so far this year were found in the 48104 zip code in January and the 48103 zip code in May.

If you find a bat in your house, don't let it out until you talk with the Health Department. Bat bites are so small they are often undetectable. Costly rabies post-exposure treatments can be avoided if animals are captured and sent for rabies testing.

If a bat is present in your home, leave the bat alone and contact an animal control agency. Or, use these precautions to capture the bat safely:

1. Put on leather work gloves.
2. When the bat lands, approach it slowly and place a small box or coffee can over it.
3. Slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside.
4. Tape the cardboard to the container securely, and punch small holes in the cardboard, allowing the bat to breathe.
5. If the bat is dead, put it carefully in a Ziploc bag and put it on ice until it can be sent in for testing.
6. Contact the Washtenaw County Health Department at 734-544-6700 for advice regarding sending the bat for testing.

The Washtenaw County Health Department also recommends the following additional rabies prevention measures:

- Make sure all open doors and windows have screens to prevent bats from entering your home. Check for other small openings, especially in older homes. Bats can enter through holes the size of a dime.
- If you are bitten or scratched by a stray or wild animal, clean the bite or scratch wound immediately with soap and water and seek immediate medical attention.
- Keep all pets, including cats, dogs, and ferrets, up-to-date on rabies vaccines.

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Environmental Health Division
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About Rabies

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most commonly transmitted by a rabid animal bite. The majority of reported cases occur in wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. The virus infects the central nervous system, resulting in disease within the brain and then death. If a person is exposed to rabies, the disease can be prevented by a series of injections before symptoms occur. Additional rabies information is available on the [health department's website](#) and from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

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