



James A. Barcia
Bay County Executive



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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

TO: LOCAL MEDIA SOURCES
FROM: JOEL R. STRASZ, HEALTH OFFICER
DATE: JULY 20, 2018
RE: BAT FOUND IN BAY COUNTY TESTS POSITIVE FOR RABIES

Bay City, MI – The Bay County Health Department (BCHD) has been informed that a bat captured in Bay County this week has tested positive for rabies. The bat was presented to Bay County Animal Control by residents who found the animal near their home. Animal Control sent the bat to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for testing.

This is the first animal to test positive for rabies in Bay County this year. On July 2, 2018, MDHHS issued a [news release](#) urging Michiganders to protect their families and pets from rabies after noting an increase in the amount of bats testing positive for rabies when compared to the same time period in 2017.

Any direct contact with a bat represents a potential exposure to rabies. If a person comes into contact with a bat, it is critically important to capture the bat for testing if there is reason to believe a person may have been bitten or scratched by a bat. Do not release a bat if you find it in the room of a sleeping person, an unattended child, someone who is mentally impaired, or an intoxicated individual as they may have been bitten or have had exposure to the bat's saliva without their knowledge. Bat bites typically leave no marks on the skin.

Bats captured in Bay County are sent to the MDHHS laboratory for testing. If a bat tests negative for rabies, no treatment is required. However, if a bat tests positive, or if the bat is not available for testing, the exposed person should receive the post-exposure prophylaxis for rabies as soon as possible.

To safely capture a bat, experts recommend that you wear leather gloves to avoid being bit. Place a box or a coffee can over the bat and then slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Secure it with a piece of tape and contact Bay County Animal Control at 989-894-0679 during regular business hours. If you know that you have been bitten or scratched by the bat and the exposure has occurred outside of normal business hours, seek medical attention but keep the bat. While relatively rare in the United States, human cases of rabies are almost always associated with bats. Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and is invariably fatal once symptoms appear.

“It is very common to see an uptick in bat encounters every July and August,” says Joel Strasz, Health Officer at BCHD. “It is extremely important to be able to perform tests on these animals, so that residents who come into contact can be properly treated and vaccinated, if it is necessary. Unless you are certain that no one has been bitten by a bat you find in your home, please capture it and send it to Animal Control for testing.”

For additional information, please contact the Bay County Health Department at (989) 895-4006 or visit our website at www.baycounty-mi.gov/health. Additional information regarding rabies can be found at the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> or from MDHHS at https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-76711_78041---,00.html

cc: James A. Barcia, Bay County Executive
Environmental Health Division Staff
File(s)

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