

Bats and Rabies at Schools

Information for School Administrators

Every year in the United States, children find rabid bats on schools grounds and bring them to school for show-and-tell. Several of these incidents result in children having to be vaccinated for rabies, which entails a several week-long series of vaccinations. Since rabies is fatal, such an exposure that goes unreported to adults could lead to the tragic loss of a child's life.

The Louisiana Office of Public Health maintains that prevention of contact between bats and children is extremely important and includes three key components:

1. Educating children to not touch bats or other wildlife and to immediately report a bat found on the ground to an adult
2. Informing school staff on what to do if a bat is found on the grounds
3. Decreasing the chance of bats being found on school grounds by:
 - a. informing school officials on the importance of discouraging bats from roosting in or on school buildings
 - b. implementing training for county environmental health sanitarians to inspect schools to identify the presence of roosting bats, and
 - c. providing resources to schools for what to do if a bat colony is on school grounds

Teaching Children about Bats

Children need to be shown what a real bat looks like, since most people have only seen bats either in cartoons or flying in the air from a distance at dusk. When a bat is on the ground, it is difficult for both children and adults to recognize it as a bat, because the wings may be folded inward. Children should be taught to not touch a bat and to immediately tell an adult. Adults must learn the safe way of capturing a bat.

Please consider showing your children pictures of real bats that can be obtained on the internet.

Please also consider displaying posters throughout school properties imploring children not to touch bats.

Bat on the Ground: Now what?

If a bat is found on the ground, cover it with a small box or other solid container. Gently slip a piece of cardboard between the ground and box and slide the bat into the box. Use leather gloves to prevent accidental contact between hands and the bat. Make sure that all seams are tightly sealed, because bats can fit through small crevices. Call your local animal control agency. Assure that the bat is not within a child's or pet's reach.

Schools with Bat Colonies

If your school has a colony of bats roosting on school grounds, find a local Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries licensed wildlife professional with expertise in bat exclusion, or consult a professional bat exclusion company (list provided at <http://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-CH/infectious-epi/VetInfo/Rabies/LouisianaBATremovalCOMPANIES.pdf>).



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