

## Information on Bat Guano Clean-Up

The presence of accumulated bat guano in an attic can cause a serious health risk for residents. The problem begins when dried bat guano is disturbed and "bat guano dust" is created in an attic. When these microscopic spores from the dried bat guano are inhaled by humans, it can cause a serious respiratory disease called histoplasmosis. Disturbing the dirt (cleaning up the garden, sweeping out the empty building, or doing other seemingly harmless dirty work), may cause *histoplasma* spores to become airborne. Persons may then breathe in the spores and some may become ill.

The following suggestions should mitigate risk:

- Spray a mist of water over contaminated sites if you have to work there. This will help to keep down the dust (and thus the spores).
- If you must work around a contaminated area, wear disposable clothing and specially designed face masks that can filter particulate matter of one millimicron (1 mμ) in diameter.

Here are frequently asked questions regarding cleaning guano:

### **I have scattered droppings in my attic. Is it safe to vacuum them up?**

Scattered bat droppings (guano) do not pose a risk and can be safely swept up or vacuumed. Of course - the dust often found in attics may be an irritant, and you might be wise to wear a dust mask – but, there is very little risk of histoplasmosis. It is when the guano starts to accumulate and pile up that the fungus can grow and develop spores.

When bat control professionals clean up these droppings, they use industrial vacuums with special high-efficiency filters, thus reducing the risk to the worker. Even then, the experts don protective clothing and air masks to avoid breathing the spores.

### **I have a pile of bat droppings in the corner of my attic that is 8 inches deep. Is it okay to be in the house?**

Generally, there is no problem if the droppings are not disturbed, or if the air vents do not pull up air from that area.

### **I had bats living in my wall. Now I have a smell. Is it safe to breathe the air?**

While breathing the air may not be pleasant, you should not have problems associated with histoplasmosis. However, be aware that bats may carry bat mites, fleas, and other insects, and these insects are likely to find a way into your living area. Also, if a bat is trapped, it may die, and the smell of the decomposing bat, as well as the guano, may be very unpleasant. It is best to have the bats removed as quickly as possible.