

Bat and Rabies Factsheet and Recommendations

Introduction

1. Rabies is an often-fatal neurologic illness transmitted to people by direct contact with the saliva of a rabid animal. Bites are the typical route of exposure, however, contact of saliva with mucous membranes or open wounds is possible.
2. All mammals can be infected with rabies, however not all are known to transmit the disease to humans. Animals most likely to transmit rabies in the United States include bats, skunks, coyotes, foxes, and raccoons; these animals pose the greatest risk of transmitting the disease. All domestic animals (such as dogs, cats, horses, and cattle) can be infected; therefore it is important to know the animal's vaccination status. Rodents (such as squirrels, hamsters, and mice) and rabbits very rarely contract rabies.

Bat Rabies Exposures

1. There are nine species of bat indigenous to Iowa. Two of the most common bats in Iowa are the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). All bat species in Iowa are capable of being infected with and transmitting rabies.
2. Bats are a protected species in Iowa. This means it is illegal for workers to kill bats in Iowa.
3. Many bats can't take off from the ground, so a bat on the ground or floor that doesn't fly away when approached is not necessarily injured or sick.
4. Most people who have been bitten by a bat report a stinging or needle prick sensation. However, bat bites may not be noticed, especially if someone is asleep, and bat bites may leave little or no evidence of a wound or puncture.
5. What constitutes a possible rabies exposure?
 - a. There was a bite from a bat to a human.
 - b. There was saliva/neural tissue contact from a bat to a human's open cut or mucous membrane.
 - c. A bat is found in the same room with a sleeping person, an unattended child, an intoxicated person, or anyone unable to confirm that they were not bitten.
6. When should a bat be captured and submitted for rabies testing?
 - a. A person has been bitten or has had any physical contact with a bat.
 - b. A person wakes up to find a bat in the room.
 - c. A bat is found in a room with an unattended child.
 - d. A bat is found in a room with anyone who cannot reliably communicate if there was physical contact.

EH&S Safety recommendations if bat capture is part of a job description

1. Employee should select 'Rabies Potential' on a Hazard Inventory so their potential for rabies exposure can be evaluated by EH&S.
2. If a bat bite occurs, contact Occupational Medicine (515-294-2056) for determination of prophylactic measures.

3. Employee(s) should be trained on proper methods of bat capture for both employee safety and safety of the protected species.
4. Proper tools should be made available.

References

1. *DNR News Releases*. [Did you know that Iowa has nine species of bats?](#) (2018, October 25). Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
2. [What to do when there are bats in your house or yard](#). (2018, October 25). Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
3. Minnesota Department of Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control Division Zoonotic Diseases Unit. (2020). [Animal Bites and Rabies Risk](#) (January 2020 ed.). University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Lab.
4. Iowa Department of Public Health, Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) & The Center for Food Security & Public Health. (2010, June 18). [Recommendations for managing human rabies exposure](#). Iowa Department of Public Health.