



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MDHHS, MDARD, MDNR offer best practices to minimize risk of rabies
after four bats test positive in Clinton, Ingham, Kent, and Midland
counties**

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan departments of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and Natural Resources (MDNR) are urging Michiganders to adopt practices to protect their families and animals from rabies. Four bats have tested positive for rabies in Clinton, Ingham, Kent, and Midland counties in 2021.

Spring is typically when rabies cases start appearing. Generally, bats and skunks are a primary source of the disease. Michigan local health departments experience an increase in calls from citizens about bat encounters between May and September when bats are most active. In 2020, there were 56 cases of rabies in Michigan animals including 52 rabid bats and four rabid skunks.

“With warm weather coming, it is possible for Michiganders to unintentionally come into contact with a potentially infected animal,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, MDHHS chief medical executive and chief deputy for health. “If you come into physical contact with a wild animal or are bitten or scratched, it is important that you seek medical care quickly to keep a treatable situation from becoming potentially life-threatening.”

Rabies is a viral disease of mammals and is transmitted through the bite or scratch of an infected animal. Exposures can take place in a variety of settings, including when bats are found in the bedroom of a sleeping person or a child comes into contact with an infected animal. It is important to seek medical care to determine the need for post-exposure treatment.

Rabies is fatal to humans if proper treatment is not received before symptoms begin. Preventive treatment is given to people who are exposed to a potentially rabid animal. Treatment is not necessary for people if the animal can be tested and tests negative for rabies.

To protect your family and your animals from rabies, there are some very important tips to follow.

People:

- People should leave wild and stray animals alone, including baby animals. Animals could be carrying rabies and not appear sick. Do not try to nurse sick wildlife or stray animals to health. Report ill wildlife to the [Department of Natural Resources](#). Contact your local animal control agency with concerns about stray animals.
- If you are bitten or scratched by an animal, promptly seek medical care and notify your local health department about the bite.
- If a person may have been asleep in the same room as a bat, or a young child or person with an impairment may have been alone with a bat, safely confine or collect the bat if possible and contact your local health department to determine if it should be tested for rabies. If the bat escapes or is released, contact your local health department to discuss the situation and determine if treatment of people potentially exposed to the bat is necessary.

Animals:

- Talk to your veterinarian about vaccinating pets and livestock. Even indoor pets that never go outside can encounter a bat that gets inside the home. Rabies is fatal in animals, and there is no treatment. Therefore, vaccination is important to protect your pets and livestock from rabies.
- If your animal is bitten, scratched or may have been unsupervised with a wild or stray animal, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. Even if your animal is currently vaccinated against rabies, additional actions may need to be taken to prevent the spread of the virus. If possible, safely confine or capture the wild or stray animal without touching the animal. Then, contact your local animal control agency or a veterinarian, as the animal may need to be tested for rabies.
- Keep your pet on a leash and under your control as this can reduce the chances of having contact with wild and stray animals.

More information about rabies and a map of rabies positive animals in Michigan can be found at Michigan.gov/rabies.

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