

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Adirondack Bank Building, 4th Floor, 185 Genesee St., Utica, NY 13501

ANTHONY J. PICENTE, JR.
ONEIDA COUNTY EXECUTIVE



PHYLLIS D. ELLIS, BSN, MS, F.A.C.H.E.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION

Phone: (315) 798-5064 ☎ Fax: (315) 798-6486 ☎ Email: environmentalhealth@ocgov.net

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Bobbi Kahl (315) 798-5064

The New York State Department of Health and the Oneida County Health Department are urging residents to avoid the risk of rabies and rabies treatment by capturing and submitting for testing any bat found in their home that may have had contact with humans or their pets.

Rabies is a rare disease in humans; however, one or more fatal human cases do occur almost every year in the United States, predominantly from rabid bat exposures. Rabies is essentially 100% fatal; however, it is nearly always preventable by reducing exposures to wild and unvaccinated animals and medically managing animals and individuals who may have been exposed to rabid animals early after an exposure.

People usually come in contact with bats through a pet bringing home a sick or dead bat, or by a bat entering their homes through small openings or open windows. People who wake up from sleeping and find a bat in their room may have had an exposure without realizing it; the teeth of a bat are very small and people are sometimes bitten in their sleep without feeling it

Dan Gilmore, Director of Environmental Health, said, “Bats in your home present a particular concern.” If you find a bat in the living spaces of your home do not let it escape. The bat should be captured using extreme care to avoid contact. Once captured, call the Oneida County Health Department for instructions on what to do. An exposure may have occurred and the bat may need to be tested.

Any bat that comes into contact with a human may be rabid even if it looks healthy, according to health officials. Bats that are active by day, are unable to fly, or are found in places where they aren’t usually seen – such as inside the living spaces of your home – are more likely to be rabid.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that anyone who wakes to find a bat in their room or that of child or an incapacitated person, makes every effort to safely catch the bat and get it tested for rabies to avoid having to undergo rabies treatment. You should:

- Close all doors and windows to prevent the bat from escaping.
- Wait for the bat to land
- Wearing gloves, slowly approach the bat and place a coffee can or plastic container over it trapping it against the wall or floor.
- Carefully slip a flat piece of cardboard under the can or container trapping the bat inside.
- Tape the cardboard to the can sealing the bat inside.
- CONTACT THE ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT at 798-5064 for instructions for having the bat tested for rabies.

To protect yourself and your pets, OCHD offers the following tips:

- Do not touch a bat with your bare hands.
- If you have had an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention immediately.
- Always vaccinate your pets, including horses. Pets may encounter bats outdoors or in the home.
- Bat-proof your home or cabin by plugging all holes in the siding and maintaining tight-fitting screens.

For more information please call the OCHD at (315) 798-5064.