



HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

RICHARD O. BRAJER
Secretary

DANIEL STALEY
Director, Division of Public Health

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To: Local Environmental Health Staff, Local Health Directors and Summer Camp Directors

From: Megan Davies, MD, State Epidemiologist and Epidemiology Section Director
Larry D. Michael, REHS, MPH, Environmental Health Section Director

Subject: **Rabies Prevention through Minimizing Exposures to Bats and Wildlife at Summer Camps**

Summer camps provide children wonderful educational opportunities to be outdoors in nature, but also pose a risk for exposure to wildlife and their diseases. Rabies, in humans, while rare, is almost invariably fatal. Rabies affects mammals in North Carolina, including bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, beaver, groundhogs as well as bobcats, coyotes and other large carnivores. Any mammal, however, including domestic cats, dogs and livestock, and humans may be infected with and transmit rabies.

Each year, within the United States, indigenous exposures to bats are implicated in about one to two human deaths due to rabies. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rabies may be transmitted through direct contact with a bat, a bite or scratch from a rabid animal, or if saliva from a rabid animal enters a mucous membrane or open wound. Unrecognized exposures to bats are a concern and may occur when persons in the same room as a bat are unaware that a bite or direct contact has occurred (e.g., a sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the room or an adult witnesses a bat in the room with a previously unattended child or mentally disabled person). Bat bites are practically undetectable after just a few hours. Finding a bat in a cabin has resulted in large numbers of campers and staff being referred for rabies postexposure prophylaxis at great expense to camps and local and state health departments. We recommend that local health departments and camp directors take the following safety measures. Helpful resources are provided at the end.

Prior to the opening of camps:

1. Local health department:
 - Contact summer camp directors in your jurisdiction, *early before the camp is occupied*, to provide educational information about prevention of wildlife exposures and resources to begin bat-proofing camp facilities.
 - Assist camp directors in developing protocol and educational materials about prevention of bat and wildlife exposures for both staff and campers. Education of staff and campers should occur at the beginning of each session and include how to prevent animal exposures, what to do if wildlife is witnessed in camp facilities or on camp grounds and what to do if an animal bite or exposure does occur.
2. Camp Director:
 - Begin safety measures to *bat-proof* facilities early, before the camp opens. Inspect facilities prior to use and on a daily basis. Eliminate potential portals of entry into buildings to ensure that bats and other wildlife are not present. Hire a Wildlife Damage Control Agent for professional inspection of facilities and exclusion of any bats and wildlife present in the buildings.
 - Train staff about rabies prevention measures. Instruct campers not to approach, touch, feed, capture or rehabilitate wild or stray animals, and to report wild or stray animals in or around buildings to camp officials.
 - Camp dogs, cats and livestock should have current health examinations, be free of parasites and infectious disease and be currently vaccinated against rabies (rabies vaccination certificate on file).
 - Keep contact information for local and state health departments and animal control current and accessible.

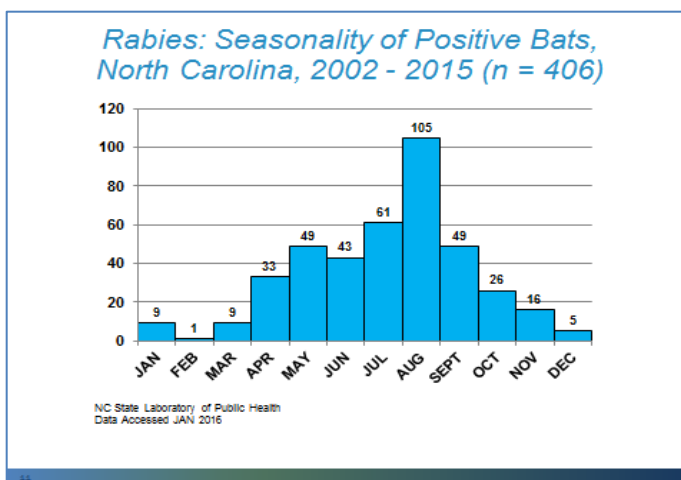
If an animal bite, scratch or exposure occurs, take IMMEDIATE action:

- Wash the victim's wounds thoroughly with soap and running water for 15 minutes. Seek medical attention.
- Contact local animal control to capture the exposing animal, confine or have it tested (species-dependent).
- Report the exposure to the local health department communicable disease (CD) nurses, who will then provide rabies risk assessments and medical guidance. If the exposing animal is not captured then discuss referral of the exposed person for rabies postexposure prophylaxis.

Helpful Resources: Prevention of Rabies from Bats and Wild Mammals

1. *BATS: Safety and Risk Management at Camp* http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/pdf/bats_final_508.pdf
2. Hire a Wildlife Damage Control Agent - professional inspection and exclusion of bats and wildlife. Locate an agent in your county at <http://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/WildlifeDamageControlAgent.aspx>
3. CDC: Wound Care and Rabies Postexposure Prophylaxis http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/medical_care/index.html. General Education
4. NC DHHS website on Rabies at <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/vph.html>.
5. CDC: Bats and Rabies <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/index.html>, to limit the risk of exposure to rabies. Contact Information
6. North Carolina, Division of Public Health, Communicable Disease Branch - 919-733-3419 (for specific rabies information, contact the state public health veterinarians: Dr. Marilyn Goss Haskell or Dr. Carl Williams).

Rabies Epidemiology in North Carolina:



Rabies: Positive Mammals and Percent Positivity by Species, North Carolina, 2015

Species	Tested	Positive	% Positive
Wild (94.1% of positives)			
Bat	1288	28	2.2
Raccoon	455	169	37.1
Skunk	71	53	74.6
Fox	127	68	53.5
Beaver	2	1	50.0
Domestic (5.9% of positives)			
Cat	952	9	0.9
Dog	820	6	0.7
Bovine	105	4	3.8
Equine	56	1	1.8
All Species			
All Tested	4060	339	8.3

NC State Laboratory of Public Health
Data Accessed JAN 2016