

Health & Safety Tip #81

BE SAFE AROUND BATS

About 5% of bats in BC are infected with rabies. Rabies is a virus that spreads to people from sick bats through bites, scratches, saliva or touching; and rabies is a serious disease and will cause death if not treated quickly.

To prevent rabies:

- Vaccinate pet dogs and cats.
- Make your home or cabin 'batproof' (keep doors and windows closed or screened and ensure attic vents are properly screened).
- Seek professional bat control advice if you observe bats in your work area or home environment.
- Avoid locations or activities where bats are likely to be encountered (e.g. caves).
- Warn children about the risks of exposure to rabies (e.g. not approaching wildlife or handling bats).
- Do not touch live or dead bats.

If you come across a live bat in an enclosed area:

- Leave the room, close the doors to other rooms, turn off the lights and open outside windows and doors (flying bats usually leave on their own).
- If you need to restrict the bat's movement, use a blanket, net, broom, towel or hand-net to do so.

If contact has occurred between a bat and a human:

- If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound well with soap and water.
- If you have ANY contact with a bat, call the VIHA Communicable Disease Program office for your area at the numbers listed below, see your doctor immediately or go to a clinic.
- If the bat is still present, health or animal control officials will retrieve it for rabies testing.

Contact Information:

Communicable Disease Program
South Island 1-866-665-6626
Central Island 1-866-770-7798
North Island 1-877-887-8835

