
HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Bat found in Kent County Tests Positive for Rabies

Grand Rapids – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) has been informed that a bat captured in Kent County has tested positive for rabies. The bat was presented to the Kent County Health Department by residents who found the animal in their home. KCHD sent the bat to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for testing. This is the first positive Kent County case this year. More than 25 bats from Kent County have tested negative in 2018. In 2017 there were two bats tested that were positive for the disease, according to MDHHS.

On July 2, 2018, MDHHS issued a [news release](#) urging Michiganders to protect their families and pets from rabies after noting an uptick in the amount of bats testing positive for rabies when compared to the same time period in 2017.

Any direct contact with a bat represents a potential exposure to rabies. It is critically important to capture the bat for testing if there is reason to believe a person may have been bitten or scratched by a bat. Do not release a bat if you find it in the room of a sleeping person, an unattended child, someone who is mentally impaired or an intoxicated individual as they may have been bitten without their knowledge. A captured bat in Kent County will be sent to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for testing. If the bat tests negative for rabies, no treatment is required. However, if a bat tests positive, or if the bat is not available for testing, the exposed person should receive the post-exposure prophylaxis for rabies.

To safely capture a bat, experts recommend that you wear leather gloves to avoid being bit. Place a box or a coffee can over the bat and then slide a piece of cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Secure it with a piece of tape and contact the Kent County Health Department at 616-632-7200 during regular business hours. If you know that you have been bitten or scratched by the bat and the exposure has occurred outside of normal business hours, seek medical attention but keep the bat.

While relatively rare in the United States, human cases of rabies are almost always associated with bats. Rabies is a viral disease that affects the central nervous system and is invariably fatal once symptoms appear.

“Bat encounters rise every year during warmer months,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer at KCHD. “We can’t stress enough how important it is to be able to perform tests on these animals. Unless you are certain that no one has been bitten by a bat you find in your home, please do not let it go.”

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.