



Clinton County Health Department

133 Margaret Street, Plattsburgh, New York 12901-2926

"Working Together for a Healthier Community"

health.clintoncountyny.gov



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Administration Division

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Media Release

Date: August 28, 2025
For Immediate Release
Contact: 518-565-4840

Bat Tests Positive for Rabies

Plattsburgh, August 28, 2025. A positive rabies test result was reported to the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD). A City of Plattsburgh resident contacted the City Police and Animal Control Officer after finding a bat acting strangely in their front yard. The bat was then removed and sent for testing by City personnel. On 8/27/2025 CCHD was informed that test came back positive for the rabies virus, and immediately contacted USDA and City personnel to investigate. It was confirmed that there were no human or pet exposures in this case.

Rabies is a fatal viral infection, usually transmitted by an infected animal's bite. Humans can be exposed to rabies through a bite or scratch from a bat. The virus is passed through the animal's saliva.

"If you see a bat enter your home, you can open windows so the bat can escape," explained Quinn Rufa, Director/Engineer of Environmental Health & Safety at CCHD. "However, if you didn't see the bat enter, it can be difficult to know if the bat came in contact with a person or pet. Bats can squeeze through very small spaces (1/2 inch thick) and are one of the few wild animals that successfully enter our homes - potentially bringing the rabies virus with them."

A person can be bitten by a bat or exposed to its saliva and not know it. Bats have small sharp teeth, which may not leave a visible bite mark, and a bite from a bat during the night may not awaken a sleeping person. You cannot tell if a bat has rabies by looking at it or by the way it acts. The only way to know if an animal has rabies is to send it for testing. In addition to rooms with a person who is sleeping, bats found in a room with an unattended child, someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or someone with a mental disability should also be captured. They might not be able to accurately report if they came into contact with the bat or not.

"Though most bats do not have rabies, we know the virus is present in some Clinton County bats," explained Mr. Rufa. "If a bat is released and not available for testing, we have to assume that it may have been rabid and treat any person or pet who may have been exposed with a post-exposure treatment."

"For post-exposure treatment to be effective, it must be started before a person experiences symptoms of rabies," added Mr. Rufa. "We cannot stress enough the importance of capturing the bat."

If you find a bat in your home or camp, and are unsure about whether anyone has come in contact with it, capture the bat without damaging the head and contact your health department. In Clinton County, call 518-565-4870. For a quick video on how to properly capture a bat, visit <https://health.clintoncountyny.gov/rabiesprevention>."



"Persons who have any physical mobility or other needs, call the telephone number above to arrange for accommodations"

Use caution when capturing a bat.

- Close doors, windows and closet doors to keep the bat in the room.
- Turn on the lights if the room is dark.
- Wear gloves (heavy, preferably pliable thick leather) and wait for the bat to land.
- Cover the bat with a coffee can or similar container with a lid.
- Slide a piece of cardboard under the can, trapping the bat.
- While firmly holding the cardboard in place against the top of the can, turn the can right side up.
- Replace the cardboard with the lid (if no lid, tape the cardboard tightly to the can).
- Call your local health department. In Clinton County, call 518-565-4870.

Residents are encouraged to be proactive and take steps to keep bats out of their homes. Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to bat-proof your home. Look for holes that might allow bats to enter and seal any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch. Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics, and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.

Avoid bat-proofing from May through August. If there are young bats in your attic, many of them can't fly and keeping the adults out will trap the young who will die or try to make their way into your rooms.

In addition to bat-proofing, it is important to remember that pets, including indoor cats, must be vaccinated against rabies. New York State Public Health Law requires all dogs, cats and ferrets over four months old to be vaccinated. "Vaccinating your pets is one of the best ways to protect your family from rabies," urged Mr. Rufa. "CCHD offers free vaccine clinics several times each year. To see upcoming clinics visit <https://health.clintoncountyny.gov/rabiesclinics>."

For more information on the rabies virus, visit https://health.clintoncountyny.gov/nc_healtheffect/rabies.pdf.

About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department's Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at health.clintoncountyny.gov or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), X (Twitter [@ClintonCountyHD]), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).

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