



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT CAUTIONS RESIDENTS ABOUT EXPOSURE TO BATS

LEONARDTOWN, MD. (August 20, 2013) – The St. Mary's County Health Department has recently received reports of bats living inside the attics and living spaces of local residences. While bats have a beneficial role in the environment, their presence in homes may cause nuisance conditions in the form of odor from guano. Bats may also be infected with rabies. Rabies is a preventable viral disease that can be transmitted by infectious saliva, usually through exposure by a bite from infected mammals.

Bats have small teeth that may leave marks that are not easily visible. In some circumstances, a person may not be aware that an exposure has occurred; especially if a bat is found in a bedroom, a room with a sleeping child, or a room with an individual who has a disability. If safe capture of the bat is possible, the bat may be submitted for rabies testing.

The St. Mary's County Health Department recommends you prevent bats from entering your home. If you find a bat in your home, do not touch it with bare hands. Only let the bat go if you are sure there has been no contact with people or household pets. Contact the St. Mary's County Health Department for assistance with rabies testing of a bat that has been involved in an exposure to people or pets.

To prevent exposure to rabies, please take the following measures:

- Have your dogs, cats, ferrets, horses, sheep, and cattle vaccinated against rabies.
- Keep your pet under your control at all times, especially when traveling.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance and do not feed wildlife.

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- Avoid sick animals or animals that are acting in an unusual manner.
- Cover garbage cans securely and do not leave pet food outside.
- Do not relocate wildlife.
- Take precautions against exposure to bats, as described above.
- If you or your pet has been bitten or otherwise exposed to a suspected rabid domestic animal, get the owner's name, address, and phone number and contact the St. Mary's County Health Department immediately.

If you have had contact with a bat or suspect an exposure to a bat has occurred in your home, please call the St. Mary's County Health Department at 301-475-4321. For more information about bats, including how to exclude bats from your home and the removal of bat guano, please visit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources website at http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/plants_wildlife/bats/batsinhome.asp.

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