

Need-2-Know (N2K): Bats in Ontario

Facts about bats

- August is the busiest time for bat activity in Ontario.
- Bats are protected wildlife, and it is illegal to kill or harm them or to keep them in captivity.
- Bats provide valuable pest control by eating millions of insects (like those pesky mosquitos!).
- 17 bat species are native to Canada; there are 8 bat species in Ontario. Three of Canada's bat species are listed as Endangered under the federal Species at Risk Act.

Beware of bats

- Bats are a high-risk species for rabies.
- Bat bites can happen fast, and may be difficult to detect, but all our bat species are insect eaters, and contrary to popular belief they are very unlikely to bite someone in their sleep without them noticing!
- Bats that have been in direct contact with a person or a pet often need to be euthanized to test for rabies – so **please try to avoid touching bats at all, for their sake and yours!**

Be kind to bats!

A lot of people don't know what to do with a live bat, and unfortunately this can often result in bats being killed in inhumane ways. Most often this occurs when bats are placed alive in a freezer. This is not only inhumane, but also can initially cause a bat to go into a state of torpor. The ability of bats to enter a state of torpor is part of what makes them such hardy animals and able to survive extreme conditions. Bats can enter a state of torpor (relatively deep sleep) for a few hours or a few days at a time. This can make it very difficult for a member of the public to determine if the bat is in fact deceased or just sleeping. Bats have survived being placed in a freezer for up to 72 hours, being sealed in an airtight container for up to 48 hours, and even crush injuries resulting in bleeding from the nose.

What to do with a live bat

If a bat needs to be tested for rabies due to contact with a person or a domestic animal, and there is any doubt as to whether it may still be alive, the bat should be placed in a box or container with a secure lid and kept in a cool, dark, quiet area until it can be assessed and humanely euthanized, if needed, by a veterinarian, animal/wildlife control personnel, or a trained wildlife custodian.

If the bat has not had any contact with a person or pet, then it can be released outside (during warmer months) or taken to a wildlife rehab facility (during the winter when insect activity is very low). If the bat was found indoors, consult a professional wildlife/pest control company to help determine how to prevent other bats from entering the building.

Resources

- [What to do if you find a bat in your house](#)
- [Humane Euthanasia For Bats Prior to Rabies Testing \(OAVT\)](#)