

Bats on Campus

Bats, by consuming copious quantities of flying insects, are a very positive influence on our environment. While they are beneficial, they are one of the most common carriers of rabies. During the spring and fall migration, it is more common for citizens to see bats on the ground, hanging in shrubs around our homes and sometimes inside our homes. Simply seeing a bat does not mean it is rabid but there is a higher probability if these nocturnal creatures are seen during daylight hours.

What to do if you find a bat inside or outside your building

If you find a bat, alive or dead, immediately cover it with a net, can or other container and call the **Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC) at 713-229-7300 to pick it up**. If unable to cover the bat, leave the laboratory, office or room and call the **Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC) at 713-229-7300 to pick it up**.

You may also call the **University's Customer Service Line FIXIT (3-4948)**.

Do not touch the bat.

If you see a bat hanging in a shrub or other place near the ground do not touch it. Call BARC for instructions as to what to do until BARC can send an animal control officer to pick up the bat. **Someone must remain available to meet the animal control officer.**

If you find a bat in your laboratory, office or rooms do not attempt to catch the bat or remove it from your premises, call BARC. BARC will send an animal control officer to remove the bat from your premises. Secure the room by closing all windows and doors to prevent the bat's escape, then leave the room; keep everyone, including children and pets out of the room until the bat is removed. If the bat should come in contact with any person, please write down the name, address and telephone number of that person for the animal control officer. **Someone must remain available to meet the animal control officer.**

Should any bat test positive for rabies, it will be necessary for BARC to contact all persons who may have come into contact with the bat to assess the risk of exposure. If it is determined a person has a high risk of exposure, it will be necessary for their physician to assess whether post exposure rabies prophylaxis is necessary.

For post exposure treatment information, please call Texas Department of State Health Services Region 6/7 at 713-767-3300.

Never ever touch a bat, call BARC AT 713-229-7300! More information:
<http://www.houstontx.gov/health/BARC/index.html>

Please provide the following information to BARC:

- **If any human contact occurred with the bat**
- **Time of day and location bat**
- **Color of bat**
- **Whether the bat is living or dead**
- **If anyone was either asleep or intoxicated where the bat was found**
- **If any small children or elderly people were present where the bat was found**

Information about Rabies

Rabies is a widespread, viral infection of warm-blooded animals. Caused by a virus in the Rhabdoviridae family, it attacks the nervous system and, once symptoms develop, is 100 percent fatal in animals.

In North America, rabies occurs primarily in skunks, raccoons, foxes, and bats. In some areas, these wild animals infect domestic cats, dogs, and livestock. In the United States, cats are more likely than dogs to be rabid. Generally, rabies is rare in small rodents - beavers, chipmunks, squirrels, rats, mice, or hamsters. Rabies is also rare in rabbits. In the Mid-Atlantic States, where rabies is increasing in raccoons, woodchucks can be rabid.

How does rabies occur?

The rabies virus enters the body either through a cut, scratch, or through mucous membranes (such as the lining of the mouth and eyes), and travels to the central nervous system. Once the infection is established in the brain, the virus travels down the nerves from the brain and multiplies in different organs.

The salivary glands and organs are most important in the spread of rabies from one animal to another. When an infected animal bites another animal, the rabies virus is transmitted through the infected animal's saliva. Scratches by claws of rabid animals are also dangerous because these animals lick their claws.

What are the symptoms of rabies?

The incubation in humans from the time of exposure to the onset of illness can range anywhere from five days to more than a year, although the average incubation period is about two months. The following are the most common symptoms of rabies. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- low-grade fever
- headache

- appetite loss
- intense thirst, but drinking will induce painful throat spasms
- restlessness
- hyperactivity
- disorientation
- seizures

Symptoms of rabies may resemble other medical conditions and problems. Always consult your physician for a diagnosis.

Recommended Treatment for Rabies

If you require treatment, two products are used:
Rabies immune globulin; and Rabies vaccine

Rabies Immune Globulin (RIG):

RIG is a sterile solution of naturally produced antibodies taken from donated human blood. All donated blood is tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV, and any blood testing positive is destroyed. RIG is also treated with a solvent/detergent and then heated to high temperatures for several hours, killing any viruses or bacteria that may still have been present.

RIG helps to neutralize the rabies virus before it becomes established in the person's body. If there is a wound, it is injected just under the skin around the wound site. If there is no visible wound, it is injected into the buttock muscle in adults, and into the thigh muscle of children. The amount of RIG a person receives is based on their weight. For this reason, more than one injection is usually needed to give the amount required for protection.

Side effects may include fever, headache, feeling unwell, rash, or chills. There may be some tenderness, soreness or stiffness where the injection was given.

Rabies Vaccine:

Five doses of rabies vaccine are given by injection over a 28-day period. The vaccine helps the immune system make antibodies against the rabies virus.

Adults and older children get the injection in the muscle of the upper arm; infants and children less than 18 months of age get the injection in the thigh muscle.

Side effects may include fever, headache, nausea, muscle aches and dizziness. There may be tenderness and swelling where the injection was given.