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# Furry can be fatal

## Residents asked to bat-proof homes

Ithaca/Stanton/St.Johns, MI~ Seeing bats flutter in the nighttime sky is a sure sign that summer is upon us. Most people avoid these critters at all costs, and for good reason. Bats are the most common animal in Michigan to transmit rabies, a viral infection contracted through a bite or scratch from an infected animal that attacks the brain and nervous system.

“Rabies is 100% fatal if left untreated,” said Dr. Graham, Medical Director for MMDHD. “And since we have had numerous rabid bats in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties we are advising families to bat-proof their homes by making sure to repair any loose soffits, flashings, eaves and siding. Make sure all doors shut tightly with no gaps, that all window screens are not damaged or torn, and cover roof vents with screens.”

If you capture a bat in your home, you should contact your local health department about having it tested for rabies, and most certainly if one is found in the room of a sleeping person. Determining whether or not the bat has rabies may spare family members from undergoing rabies vaccination treatment. Make sure to capture the bat without touching it with your bare skin and put it in a coffee can or sturdy container and call MMDHD at 989-831-5237 to discuss testing and treatment options. If you have been bitten by a bat or other wild or stray animal, you should contact your health care provider immediately for treatment.

Skunks, raccoons, foxes, and unvaccinated cats and dogs are also likely rabies carriers. To help protect yourself, avoid approaching or touching any wild or stray animal and remember that *furry can be fatal*.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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