



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 06-30-10**

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## Residents asked to bat-proof homes

Stanton, MI- Seeing bats flutter in the nighttime sky is a sure sign that summer is here. 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 direct contact from an infected animal.

“Rabies is 100% fatal if left untreated,” said Dr. Graham, Medical Director for MMDHD. “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.”

Mid-Michigan District Health Department recommends if a bat is found in the room of a sleeping person that it be tested for rabies. Determining whether or not the bat has rabies may spare family members from undergoing rabies vaccination treatment.

To catch a bat safely, first and foremost, make sure to capture the bat without touching it with your bare skin; leather work gloves are ideal. Have a small box or coffee can, a piece of cardboard and tape ready. When the bat lands, approach it slowly. While wearing the gloves, place the box or coffee can over the bat. Slide the cardboard under the container to trap the bat inside. Tape the cardboard securely to the container and punch small holes in the cardboard, allowing the bat to breathe, and then contact the health department at the numbers listed below to discuss testing and treatment options. It is important to note that if the bat’s head is crushed it will not be able to be tested.

Skunks, raccoons, foxes, and unvaccinated cats and dogs are also likely rabies carriers. To help protect yourself from rabies, avoid approaching or touching any wild or stray animal. If you have been bitten by a bat or other wild or stray animal, you should contact your health care provider immediately for treatment.

Clinton County Branch Office: 989-224-2195

Gratiot County Branch Office: 989-875-3681

Montcalm County Branch Office: 989-831-5237

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

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