

CUYAHOGA COUNTY
BOARD OF HEALTH
YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

August 2021

To: Local cable access, community websites, community non-emergency information line or resident email

RE: Bats and Other Critters in My House

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) receives calls daily from residents throughout the county regarding a wide variety of nuisance animals found in the home. Not only can the animal be a problem, but what may also be on the animal can be even a bigger problem. They often carry mites, ticks, or fleas. Urine and feces left behind by these critters can also cause problems in the household. Bats are a major concern because they can carry rabies. Although only a few are infected, any bat found in the home can create a very stressful situation for a family. Unfortunately, every year we are notified of individuals who need to go through the rabies post-exposure procedure. This process includes receiving four shots over a two-week period, as a result of potential exposure to a rabid bat.

As our housing stock continues to age, gaps can develop on wood or brick-sided homes that allow animals, including bats, to enter. A majority of the calls we receive related to bats being found in a home come from communities that have a significant number of older homes, especially those between 50-100 years old. An animal, such as a woodpecker or squirrel, may create a small hole on the home's surface, which may allow a bat or bird to enter. In some cases, a raccoon may then enlarge the hole to gain entrance. Rats and mice can also enter through and expand holes near ground level or may come up sewer lines and enter a home.

Simple home maintenance tips can help you prevent nuisance animals from entering your home. Please review the following suggestions to help keep your home and family healthy and safe:

- Several times a year, walk around your home and check the siding, soffits, gutters, roof, windows, and chimney for gaps. If you are not able to do so, have a family member or professional do it as often as possible. Perform any necessary repairs to seal up any openings.
- Install a screen over your chimney opening, as well as any openings from dryer/bathroom exhaust vents, furnaces, or hot water tanks.
- Make sure a drain cover is installed over any floor drains in the basement.
- Keep landscaping maintained around the home. Do not allow bushes or trees to get so high that they create a pathway for squirrels and raccoons. Do not allow leaves or other debris to be piled up next to the house. Keep firewood away from the house.
- If you hear strange noises in ceilings or walls, it is likely an unwanted animal has found a way into the home. It is important to find the entry point as soon as possible.
- Make sure windows and doors properly close. Use screens if possible and make sure they are tightly secured.

If a bat is found in the home and someone may have been exposed or unknowingly spent time in a room with the bat, it is important that the bat be captured safely and tested for rabies. Try not to physically damage the bat's head while capturing it if at all possible. Hitting the bat with a tennis racket, baseball bat or other hard item may damage it to the extent that may prevent laboratory testing. Please visit our website (www.ccbh.net) for more information. Routine home maintenance and eliminating nuisance animal entry points promptly can potentially lessen the impact to your family and ultimately your wallet. Please contact a local pest control company or nuisance trapper if necessary for assistance. Please follow these simple steps to help protect your family and your home.

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Terrence M. Allan, R.S., M.P.H. Health Commissioner