



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health • Communicable Disease Branch**

1902 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1902

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Jeffrey P. Engel, M.D.
State Health Director

Date: 14 July 2010
To: NC Local Health Directors
From: Carl Williams, State Public Health Veterinarian
Subject: Rabies; Health and Safety Issues at Summer Camps

Camp season has begun and camp owners and operators must ensure that seasonal use buildings common to camps are free from bat infestation. Bats often reside in undisturbed areas such as eave troughs, attics and crawl spaces. So long as they remain there and cannot gain access to the living space of buildings there is no immediate health hazard. However, if bats can gain access to the living space of buildings, particularly areas where people sleep, the risk of exposure to rabies significantly elevated. By NC Law (<http://www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/ehs/rules.htm>), camps are inspected at least once during the operating season, but responsible camp directors will assure that sleeping quarters are assessed daily by the staff or group leaders. Local health directors are asked to make contact with camp directors in their community and stress the importance of rabies prevention.

Rabies is an infectious disease that affects the nervous system and is always fatal once symptoms develop. It is transmitted through the bite of an infected animal. Most human cases of rabies in the United States are due to prior bat exposure, and in most cases direct contact with bats is not documented. Bites from bats may be so minor as to not wake persons who are sleeping when the bite occurs. If a bat or bats are identified in a room where people sleep please take the following actions:

1. Immediately move residents to a bat free building
2. Contact your local health department for an appropriate rabies risk assessment
3. Have staff safely collect the bat for submission for rabies testing
 - a. <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/contact/capture.html>
 - b. <http://batcon.org/index.php/bats-a-people/removing-a-bat.html>
4. Begin work to exclude bats from the building
5. Do NOT repopulate the building until you are certain all bats are excluded

In addition to bats other mammals, primarily terrestrial carnivores such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes and bobcats, can transmit rabies. Remind campers to respect wildlife and observe it from a distance. The following steps can be taken to reduce exposure to rabies among campers and staff

1. Do not touch, pet, or feed wild or stray animals. Report stray dogs and cats to animal control.
2. Avoid sick animals
3. Place all waste, especially food, in covered trash cans.
4. Immediately and thoroughly wash all animal bites with running water and soap. Consult a physician.

Many summer camps include livestock care and maintenance. While this is a tremendous learning opportunity strict attention to hygiene and waste management is required to prevent enteric illness. The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians has developed guidelines to prevent disease associated with animals in public settings: <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalsInPublicSettings.pdf>.

If you have any questions please call the veterinary public health program at 919-733-3410

Cc: Larry Michael, Food Protection Branch Head, NC Division of Environmental Health

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