

Nuisance Control of Bats

February, 2012

People often have problems with bats in their homes. Although bats are great insect eaters and should be encouraged, no one wants them in the home. The main concern is for rabies.

Although the most common type of bat found in homes is the little brown bat and it is less likely than some other species to carry rabies, it still should be a serious concern. Any bats should be removed without touching them and any bites or scratches should be treated by a physician.

Bats do not need much of a space to enter attics and roof areas. Then it takes very little for them to move through walls, etc. and find their way into the home.

They can slip through areas around pipes coming through the wall, places where molding has gotten loose around doors and windows, where ceiling lights don't fit flush to the ceiling, etc. Once in the rooms they can be little devils to catch. The best means is to use something like a tennis racket or a small net like you would use to pluck fish out of the water. Brooms, etc. are solid and the air movement just pushes them away. They use their "sonar" to avoid such objects as well.

Sometimes you can watch where they land and get them that way. **BUT DO NOT PICK THEM UP OR CATCH THEM WITH YOUR BARE HANDS OR EVEN CLOTH GLOVES.** Bat teeth are very tiny and you can be bitten and not even notice. You can put a can or jar over them and slide a piece of cardboard or something under the jar top trapping them inside. (Wear the leather gloves!!)

Ideally, if they are alive, you should take them outside and turn them loose. But it is NOT illegal to kill bats that are in your home. The problem with turning them loose is that they may come back unless you determine where they are getting in and plug up the spot.

IF THE BAT FLIES AGAINST YOU OR YOU PICK IT UP WITH YOUR HANDS, YOU MUST HAVE THE BAT TESTED FOR RABIES. Contact your local vet ... keeping the bat alive or, if dead, in a COOL place (do NOT freeze) until morning if this is at night. You are encouraged to look at the web page Rabies and go to all the good links at the Iowa Dept. of Public Health web site.