

Rabies in Nevada Bats

Frequently Asked Questions



What is rabies?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease that causes inflammation of the brain in mammals and is consistently fatal in humans if early treatment is not sought. Human rabies is rare, and on average, only one to four cases of human rabies is found every year in the United States.

How is rabies in humans contracted?

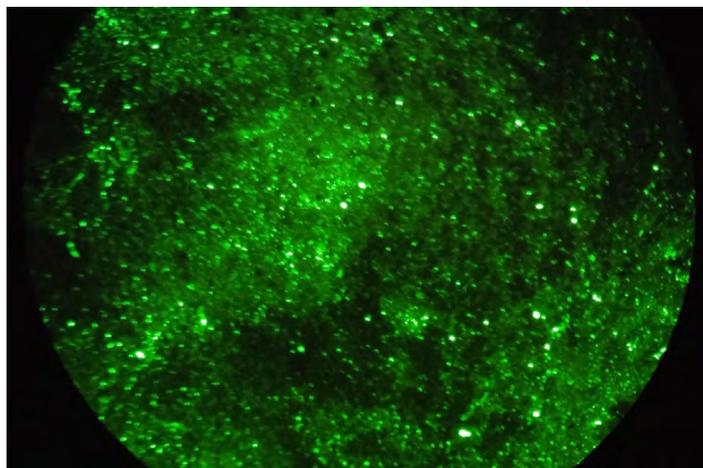
The most common exposure of humans to rabies in the United States is from bites by bats that carry rabies. You can't get rabies from a bat simply by:

- seeing a bat from a distance.
- being in the same room as a bat.
- noticing a bat when it is flying.
- touching bat feces, blood, urine or fur.

If a bat has bitten you or any infectious material (bat saliva or brain material) has entered your eyes, nose, mouth or a wound, seek medical help immediately. New advances in medicine have proven to be very effective in fighting against rabies.

How do I protect myself and my family against rabies?

Awareness and knowledge of facts about bats and rabies in the United States can help protect against rabies. The [Center for Disease and Control \(CDC\) website](#) offers information about bats and rabies for educational purposes. It is also important to educate children about bats and rabies and teach them to never come in contact with wild animals.



Rabies (under a microscope) from an adult male big brown bat, as confirmed by the NDA's Animal Disease Laboratory.

Do all bats have rabies?

Most bats don't have rabies. It is estimated that less than one percent of Nevada bats actually have rabies. Of the few bats in Nevada that people send to the NDA for testing, only eight to 15 percent have rabies. The NDA only receives dead or diseased bats specifically sent in for testing, so this number is higher than the state average.

How do I tell if a bat is rabid?

Rabies can only be confirmed in a laboratory. You can't tell if a bat has rabies just by looking at it. If a bat is active in the daytime or is in a place that it normally wouldn't be, like inside a home or out on your lawn, this can be a sign the bat may have rabies. A bat that can't fly or lets you approach could also have rabies. Whether a bat is showing possible signs of rabies or not, it is best to leave the bat alone and try not to come in contact with it.

Contact

▶ Animal Disease Laboratory

☎ 775-353-3709

🌐 agri.nv.gov/

Nevada Department of Agriculture
405 South 21st Street • Sparks, NV 89431

▶ Dr. JJ Goicoechea, State Veterinarian

☎ 775-738-8076

🌐 jgoicoechea@agri.nv.gov

Nevada Department of Agriculture
4780 East Idaho Street • Elko, NV 89801

Resources

▶ Vaccinate pets against rabies.

Vaccination is required for cats, dogs and ferrets in the state of Nevada. Vaccination is also recommended for horses that may travel out of state.

▶ Don't allow direct contact with bats.

Because it's impossible to confirm rabies in bats without a laboratory, always exercise caution and never allow direct contact between bats and humans or pets.

▶ CDC information about rabies:

www.cdc.gov/rabies

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What do I do if a bat is in my home?

If you find a bat in your home and it hasn't come in contact with any human or animal, open all windows leading outside. The bat will probably leave in time, but if it doesn't, capturing the bat may be necessary. If the bat has come in contact with any human or animal, it should be captured and sent to the Animal Disease Lab for testing.

How do I capture a bat?

If you find a bat in your home, it is important to try to get help from your local health department or animal control center to capture it. If those resources are not available, wear leather gloves and get a box or other solid container large enough to hold the bat. Put the box on top of the bat carefully and slide a piece of cardboard underneath to trap the bat inside. Holes should be made in the box so the bat can breathe and you should contact your local animal control or the Animal Disease Lab for further directions.

Can my pets or livestock also be infected with rabies from bats?

Vaccinations prevent rabies in some pets and are mandatory for cats, dogs and ferrets in Nevada. A pet that is not vaccinated is more likely to get rabies.

If an unvaccinated pet comes in contact with a bat or plays with a live bat in daylight, contact your veterinarian. When possible, the bat your pet came in contact with should also be submitted to the [Nevada Department of Agriculture's Animal Disease Laboratory](#).

Although not mandatory, horses should be vaccinated against rabies if they travel to areas with terrestrial rabies like California or Arizona.



The Animal Disease Laboratory confirms rabies eight to 15 percent of the bats it tests, but it is estimated only one percent of bats in Nevada have rabies. The lab only receives dead or diseased bats for testing, which is why the percentage is higher than the state average.