

Bat Awareness and Public Health

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Lots of population health work going on:

- Strong healthy communities partnerships with municipalities, including Squamish
- Planning 3rd annual Sea to Sky Congress for 2020
- My Health My Community Round 2 starting in early 2020
- Etc.

However....



Why are we talking about this?

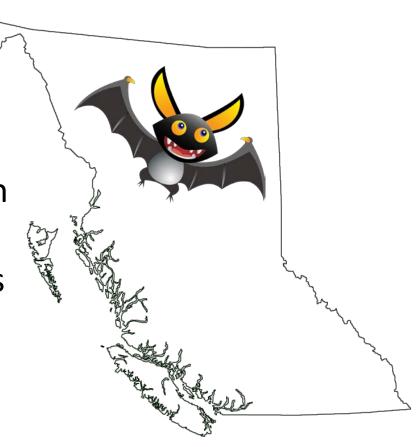
- Recent death from rabies following bat exposure in BC
- Highly effective preventive treatment available
- Public health responsible for following up on high risk human bat exposures
- Most bat exposures occur in rural areas of VCH



Bats in BC

There are at least 16
 species of bats living in BC,
 11 of which can be found in
 the lower mainland

- Bats are essential members of local ecosystems
- Conservation concern:
 - Habitats at risk
 - White-nose syndrome



Bats in BC – seasonal exposures









- Most reports of bat exposures in BC occur in spring and summer
 - Bats hibernate or migrate in the winter
 - People spend less time outdoors in the fall and winter*

What is Rabies?

- Rabies is caused by a virus
- Transmitted through saliva
- Infects the brain and nervous system



If not treated in time, rabies infection is almost always fatal



Bats and Rabies

- Bats are the ONLY reservoir of rabies in British Columbia
- In 2018, 7.6% of bat specimens submitted to the animal testing lab tested positive for rabies in BC¹



Estimated that only

0.5% of bats in BC

carry rabies



Rabies transmission



- Rabies can be transmitted through bites, scratches, or mucous membrane exposure to bat saliva
- Requires a direct exposure to a bat

Risk of Rabies in BC

 While there are an estimated <u>59,000</u>¹ human deaths from rabies globally each year, only <u>3</u> human cases of rabies have been reported in BC since 1924²

Nonetheless – the disease is **severe** and we have a **highly effective preventive treatment**



What to do if you have a direct exposure?

- Immediately wash the wound well with soap and water for 10 min.
- Seek urgent medical attention from your doctor or local public health unit





What to do with the bat?

- If the bat is dead:
 - Environmental Health Officers* can submit for testing
- If the bat is alive:
 - Don't try to capture if you have not had previous contact with the bat
 - Call local pest control



What is Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis?

- Wounds or clear site of exposure:
 - Rabies immunoglobulin (blood product)
- Vaccine series
 - Three doses of rabies
 vaccine on day 0, 3, 7*



Heather Hazzan, SELF Magazine. https://www.aap.org/enus/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Immunizations-Image-Gallery.aspx



Other notes

- If pet exposed and no direct contact with human contact veterinarian for assessment
- More information on managing bat pests in the home can be found at the following provincial resource:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/pesticides-pest-management/managing-pests/animals/bats



Questions?

