



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

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Scott Walker, Governor  
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**BATS AND RABIES STILL A CONCERN IN WINTER,  
HEALTH OFFICIALS WARN**

It may be midwinter in Wisconsin, but people can still come in contact with bats and be exposed to rabies, according to state health officials. A rabid bat from northwest Wisconsin was diagnosed last week.

“It’s uncommon to find a rabid bat so early in the year, but bats have been diagnosed with rabies in January in the past,” said Dr. Jim Kazmierczak, State Public Health Veterinarian. Although the majority of bats overwinter in caves and mines and become inactive, some may find shelter indoors and occasionally come into contact with people or pets.

People cannot acquire rabies simply by being in the same room as a rabid bat if they know that they had no physical contact with the animal, according to Kazmierczak. A nick from a bat’s tooth or claw, such as when the bat flies into someone’s face or arm, is needed to transmit the rabies virus. “If there is physical contact with a bat, there would be the potential for rabies transmission to occur, assuming the bat was rabid,” he said. In such a case, the exposed person may need to receive the preventive series of shots to prevent rabies.

A January 26 basketball game in Milwaukee between Marquette University and Providence College was interrupted because a bat was flying around the court at the Bradley Center. Both the Marquette and Providence basketball teams were questioned and no coaches or players reported any actual contact with the bat during the game. While no spectators reported being touched by the bat at the Bradley Center, public health officials urge those who think they may have been touched by the bat to contact their local public health department.

While most bats in nature do not carry rabies, 29 rabid bats were detected in Wisconsin during 2012, according to state health officials.

For more information about rabies: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/Rabies/index.htm>

For information on safe and humane ways to remove bats from a house or other structure, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recommends following these tips: <http://www.batcon.org/index.php/bats-a-people/bats-in-buildings/subcategory.html?layout=subcategory>

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