**AMHERST COLLEGE**

**Bat Protocols**

**Capture, Euthanizing, Release and Bat Proofing Buildings**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has provided a new guidance documents for capturing, euthanizing and releasing of bats, as well as on how and when to bat-proof buildings and homes.

During the warmer summer months, bats look for cooler areas to roost and raise their young, so they relocate into building and homes instead of the attics. Bats will come through chimneys, windows and down the stairs from the attic.

It is important to follow the protocols addressed here-in, as there are new requirements for handling of bats that did, or may have made contact with person(s) or pets, regardless of whether or not a bite occurred.

In addition, there are also strict requirements for the removal and bat-proofing of buildings, including private homes, which is regulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Bat – Known or potential contact with person(s) and pet(s)**

* If a bat is found inside the building, do not release it unless it is known for sure that the bat has not made contact with a person or pet.
  + If an exposure**\*** has or might have occurred to a person or domestic animal it is imperative that the bat be safely captured using the correct equipment, euthanized and submitted for testing immediately.
    - Dr. Michael Katz, Hampshire Veterinary at 260 Snell St. in Amherst is the College Veterinarian, who is authorized to send the bat to the Hinton State Laboratory for testing.
      * Telephone Number for Hampshire Veterinary is (413) 549-5800
    - For additional information – [www.mass.gov/dph/rabies](http://www.mass.gov/dph/rabies)
      * If the above protocols are not followed, the bat may not be able to be tested, and the exposed person will have to be treated as “positive” for rabies, since the possibility for rabies cannot be ruled out.

**\*** “Exposure” is defined as a person or domestic animal that has, or may have had contact with a live bat and cannot rule out that a bite or scratch may have occurred.

* + - * Person(s) waking to find a bat in the room, or a room in which a bat and pet are found together is considered a potential exposure.
    - As long as the bat is captured for testing, decisions about post exposure prophylaxis can wait until test results are obtained
    - If the bat is found to be rabid, or the bat cannot be located for testing, post exposure prophylaxis is recommended.
      * Less than 5% of the bat population in Massachusetts is found to have rabies.
    - For advice on treatment contact your health care provider or local department of public health.
  + Pet owners are legally obligated to keep their cats and dogs up-to-date with their rabies vaccinations.
    - Unvaccinated animals and pets exposed to bats that are unavailable for testing pose a risk to people and other animals, and may need to be quarantined for extended periods or time, or euthanized.
      * Questions about animals exposed to bats should be directed to Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Division of Animal Care at (617) 626-1786.

**Bat – Capture Procedures**

* Bat removal within a building should only be done when a risk to faculty, staff or students is present
  + Bat removal from inaccessible area like attics should be performed by a licensed wildlife service
* Never attempt to capture a bat with bare hands.
* Bats should be caught by trained persons, using the appropriate personnel protective equipment.
  + Heavy duty bat resistant leather gloves are located in Amherst College Emergency Response Vehicles, both police and EH&S.
* When the bat lands, cover the bat with a suitable container, such as the 1 gallon plastic containers with screw top caps.
  + Once in the container, slide a piece of cardboard between the ceiling and top of container to trap bat.
    - Be careful not to damage the bats skull, making it unsuitable for testing.
      * For additional information on capturing bats go to: [www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/rabies/batcaptuing.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/cdc/rabies/batcaptuing.pdf)
      * For additional information on potential rabies exposure, or how to submit bats for testing;

[www.mass.gov/dph/rabies](http://www.mass.gov/dph/rabies)

(617) 983-6800

**Bat-Proofing Buildings and Homes**

* Bats are typically found in buildings and homes during the late summer
  + They seek cooler places inside living spaces as attics become too warm
* To determine whether or not bats are in buildings, homes and residence halls, look for the following;
  + Bat droppings (guano) on floors in attics
  + Stain marks under eaves
  + Entry points for flying bats outside the house at dusk
* To keep bats out of the building, homes and residence halls;
  + - Keep and maintain window screens in place.
      * Replace missing screens, and repair damage as soon as possible.
    - Cap chimneys with suitable screens
    - Seal electrical and plumbing openings
    - Identify the locations (at dusk) where bats may be entering the building
      * Loosely hang clear plastic sheeting over the holes through which the bats pass
        + Bats will be able to crawl out, but will not be able to re-enter

When all bats are gone, openings can be sealed.

* + - Contact a licensed wildlife expert specializing is bats for assistance
      * There are specific times of the year when bat-proofing a building is permitted.
        + May, and
        + August 1st to mid-October, after bats have left to hibernate
      * Openings in the home cannot be covered or sealed while bats are inside
        + Doing so will drive the bats into living spaces and create health and sanitary problems if the bats are trapped inside and die.
    - Bats can enter opening of the home that 5/8” x 7/8” or larger
    - Items used for sealing these openings include, but are not limited to non-flammable spray foam, caulk, wire mesh with very small openings, tight-fitting wood, steel wool around pipes, or polypropylene bird netting.