



Keeping a Bat as a Pet

People sometimes desire having a bat as a pet. Yes, bats are beautiful and something we all love, but the act of keeping one as a pet is not only illegal, but also cruel. The bat will experience great terror, inappropriate and damaging nutrition, loss of it's right to enjoy reproduction and rearing if it's young, and terrible loneliness and boredom. Wild bats are capable of living over 25years. Bats kept as pets rarely survive more than one year.

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BatWorld Sanctuary,
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PORTSMOUTH ANIMAL CONTROL

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ANIMAL CONTROL

Bats



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The Legal Status of Bats

In New Hampshire there are two common bat species, the little brown bat and the big brown bat. Six other species have been recorded: Say's bat, Indiana bat, silver-haired bat, pipistrel, red bat and hoary bat. Bats are protected by law at many levels. Regulations govern the taking of bats from the wild, and any exchange between individuals or organizations. The transfer of bats is carefully regulated by the CDC. USDA permits from the Animal Health Inspection Service are required, and special permitting regulations now apply at the state level. Bats cannot be transported within the USA without a CDC permit. Bats can only be transferred to an institution that is bona fide conservation, zoological or scientific organization or registered establishments that have approved facilities and certified education programs. Call Wildlife Services 603-223-6832 for more information.

Bat Habits

Bats are most often seen flying during early morning, late afternoon or evening hours, feeding on insects, which they capture in an unusual way. By shaping one wing into a pouch momentarily, bats scoop up their prey, quickly seizing the insect before it can escape. The entire event occurs in less than a second, appearing as an erratic, faltering flight when several insects are captured in succession. Insects eaten in this way may be as large as moths and as small as gnats, and a single bat may eat up to 10,000 insects in an evening.

Bats and Rabies; What should I do if I encounter a Bat?

First, determine if there is any possibility that human or domestic animal contact with the bat has occurred (e.g. a bite, scratch, other direct contact, or if the bat may have been in close proximity to an unattended young child, or a sleeping or impaired person, or was in a room with an unattended pet).

If such possibilities cannot be ruled out, capture the bat, carefully avoiding direct contact with it and without damaging its head. To capture the bat, close windows, the room and closet doors, turn on lights if the room is dark, and wait for the bat to land. Wearing gloves, cover the bat with a plastic cup, coffee can or similar container. Slide a piece of cardboard (or paper plate) under the container trapping the bat. Tape the cardboard tightly to the container. Immediately contact Animal Control to arrange for rabies examination of the bat.

In the case of human contact, if the bat is found to be rabid, if it is not available for testing or if it is untestable, the following guidelines apply:

- ❖ Rabies post exposure treatment is clearly indicated if a person was bitten or scratched;
- ❖ Treatment is appropriate if someone has had direct physical (skin or mucous membrane) contact with the bat, as a precaution against (1) the possibility of an undetected minute skin penetration (bite or scratch); or (2) potential exposure to the virus through direct contact with the mucous membranes of the face;

- ❖ Treatment is also indicated, in the absence of a known direct contact, if the bat was found in proximity to a young child, a sleeping individual, or an individual under the influence of alcohol, drugs or with any other sensory or mental impairment.

In the case of domestic animal contact, if the bat is found to be rabid, if it is not available for testing or if it is untestable, the following guidelines apply:

- ❖ For a domestic animal with up-to-date rabies vaccination, the animal must be given a rabies booster vaccination within five days;
- ❖ For an unvaccinated animal, it is strongly advised that the animal be euthanized. The only alternative would be strict confinement in a quarantine facility for six months.

If you have confirmed that there was no possibility of human or domestic animal contact with the bat, it can be allowed to leave on its own, or if it is in your home, it can be released. Close the room and closet doors, open windows, turn on a light and observe the bat until it leaves. If the bat does not leave, wait for it to land and, wearing gloves, cover it with a container and slide a piece of cardboard under the container trapping the bat. Tape the cardboard tightly to the container.

Only if you are certain that there was no contact while capturing the bat, release it out of doors, away from populated areas and preferably after dark.