



## Public Health Department

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### Environmental Health

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## Bats and Your Home: Management Guidelines

### Bat Overview:

- ◆ Of the 25 species found in California, almost all are insectivores that feed on vast numbers of night-flying insects, making them an important part of the ecological community.
- ◆ Four species in particular frequently use man-made structures such as attics, barns, or bat boxes for roosting sites:
  - Pallid bat, big brown bat, Yuma myotis bat, and Mexican free-tailed bat.

### Public Health Concerns:

- ◆ In most cases, bats don't cause problems for homeowners, and because of their nocturnal habits, you rarely will see them.
- ◆ Problems that do occur often happen when migrating bats roost in buildings, usually during warmer months.
  - They can make noise and some people are uncomfortable with close proximity to bats.
  - They can create unsanitary conditions when their droppings and urine accumulate beneath roosts, creating odors and attracting insects.
  - Bats can also transmit diseases, with rabies being a special concern.
- ◆ Exposure to bat bites or aerosolized bat saliva is a serious public health concern. Without direct exposure, however, there is no public health threat.
- ◆ There are no standards for bat harborage. However, because of the potential health threat, EH staff will perform joint inspection of residences to assess the human health risks.
  - The primary focus of a housing inspection is identifying structural issues that allow bats access to the home.
- ◆ To minimize risk of disease transmission:
  - Never handle bats; do not breathe dust from bat droppings; vaccinate your dogs and cats against rabies; and educate children never to touch a bat, dead or alive.

### Management, Eviction and Exclusion:

- ◆ Sometimes a colony of bats will show up at a house in the spring or fall. Often this is a migratory colony, and it will move on after a few weeks of rest.



- Bats roosting in barns, eaves, or other outdoor spaces might not cause harm. If the bats are in an area that can be tolerated, wait for them to leave then seal the area so they cannot return.
- Bats should be discouraged from nesting in places where people congregate, such as schools, parks, public buildings, or homes. Bats flying inside inhabited buildings should be removed and excluded.
- ◆ **NOTE:** Bat harborage is protected by law from being disturbed during the summer mating and child rearing months.

**Signs of Bat Activity:**

- ◆ Bats can squeeze through openings as small as 1/4 inch. Cracks around windows, doors, pipes, electrical wiring, or vents can provide access.
- ◆ Being alert to off odors and stains caused by body oils, droppings, and urine beneath openings can help you locate roosts and entry points.
- ◆ Return late in the evening, just before dark, to observe how bats are gaining entry into a building by watching where they fly out.

**Exclusion:**

- ◆ Eviction and exclusion are the only safe and permanent ways to manage bats, but you'll want to be sure all bats have left the structure before you seal it up completely.
- ◆ Excluding Single Bats:
  - Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics. Install tighter-fitting screen doors. Ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.
  - Conduct a room-by-room search for other points of entry. Seal openings that are more than 1/2-inch in size with caulking.
  - Fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking. Bats don't chew holes or gnaw electrical wires.
- ◆ Excluding Bat Colonies:
  - Entry points of large colonies are usually quite obvious. Often, these are beneath eaves, around the chimney, around air and plumbing vents, near loose boards, beneath roof caps, or in openings that squirrels and other animals have made.
  - Seal entryways with caulking, putty, duct tape, self-expanding polyurethane foam, or hardware cloth after excluding the bats.
  - Most bats leave in late fall, making winter an ideal time to implement exclusion techniques or "bat-proof" your home. During summer, many young bats are unable to fly. If you exclude adult bats during this time, the young may be trapped inside.



**Repellents:**

- ◆ No pesticides or chemical repellents are registered in California for controlling bats or repelling them from roosting areas.
- ◆ Some mechanical repellents can help discourage bats.
  - Illuminating attic spaces and eaves with electric lights 24 hours a day might be helpful.
  - Cooling an attic with fans can make the temperature unsuitable for roosting, and the increased air movement can create a less favorable roosting area.

**Additional Information and Resources:**

**University of California, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Bat Management Guidelines**

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74150.html>

**CDC: Take Caution When Bats are Near**

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Bats/>

**University of Minnesota – Bats in Houses**

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/M1281.html>