

How to Inspect for Bats and Bat-Proof Your Home

Fact Sheet for Bat Inspection in Homes



In Massachusetts, bats may be found in homes or apartments, particularly during the late summer. Although 96% of bats submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for testing are not rabid, they sometimes carry rabies and may spread it to people or animals if they bite or scratch them. Therefore, while bats are an important part of our natural, outdoor environment, all reasonable steps should be taken to keep bats out of the home, especially from rooms people use for sleeping.

To determine if bats are already in a house:

- Listen for squeaking noises coming from attic, walls, or elsewhere.
- Inspect the attic, rafters, porches, and walls for signs of bats, including holes in walls, bat guano (feces) and crystallized urine, dirty stain marks underneath eaves, or bare scratched areas on beams.
- Walk around the outside of the house at dusk to see if bats are flying out of the house to feed, or before dawn to see if bats are flying into the house to sleep.

To get bats out of a house in which they are living:

- The bats' entry and exit points should be determined by observing the house at dusk or dawn as described above
- Seal up all entry and exit points larger than 5/8 inches by 7/8 inches at night after the bats have exited OR special netting or tubing can be used in a manner that allows bats to exit a house, but not re-enter
- Pest experts specializing in bat control should be consulted when necessary
- Killing bats is seldom necessary or desirable and poisoning bats is illegal in Massachusetts

To keep bats from entering or re-entering buildings:

- Openings should not be sealed while bats are inside--this may drive them into occupied areas or create a sanitary problem if the bats are trapped and die inside.
- Major home renovations and sealing should be done during the month of May or from August 1 through mid-October when most bats will have left to hibernate or have raised their young.
- Make sure windows have screens, chimneys are capped, and electrical and plumbing openings are plugged.
- Do not leave unscreened doors open to the outside.
- Do not leave unscreened windows open to the outside.
- Seal up all openings larger than 5/8 inches by 7/8 inches into the attic, basement, walls, or occupied areas of the house.
- Use materials such as expanding spray-on foam, caulk, wire mesh, wood that fits tightly, steel wool (around pipes that enter buildings), or polypropylene bird netting, to seal or cover gaps and holes.

For questions about bats and rabies, please contact your local board of health or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.

For more information about bats contact the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife at www.mass.gov/masswildlife or call 508-389-6300.