

# CUYAHOGA COUNTY

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## BOARD OF HEALTH

### YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

#### **PREVENTING BATS AND OTHER NUISANCE ANIMALS FROM ENTERING YOUR HOME**

Our agency receives calls daily from residents throughout the county regarding a wide variety of nuisance animals that are found in their homes. While animals themselves can present problems, what they bring with them can be even a bigger problem, such as mites, ticks, or fleas. Urine and feces they leave behind are also health hazards.

Among these animals, bats are a major concern because they can carry rabies. Although only a few are typically found to be infected each year, any bat found in a home can create a very stressful situation for a family. Unfortunately, every year we are notified of individuals who need to go through the rabies post-exposure procedure. This process includes receiving four shots over a two-week period, as a result of potential exposure to a rabid bat.

As our local housing stock continues to age, gaps can develop on wood or brick-sided homes that allow points of entry for animals, including bats. A majority of the calls we receive related to bats being found in a home come from communities that have a large number of older houses, especially those between 50-100 years old.

Woodpeckers or squirrels may create a small hole on the home's surface, which allow a bat or bird to enter. In some cases, a raccoon will enlarge the hole to gain entrance. Rats and mice can also come in and expand holes near ground level or crawl up sewer lines to get inside.

Simple home maintenance tips can help you prevent nuisance animals from entering your home. Please review the following suggestions to help keep your home and family healthy and safe:

- Several times a year, walk around your home and check the siding, soffits, gutters, roof, windows, and the chimney for gaps. If you are not able to do it yourself, have a family member or professional do it as often as possible. Perform any necessary repairs to seal up openings.
- Install a screen over your chimney opening, as well as any openings from dryer/bathroom exhaust vents, furnaces, or hot water tanks.
- Make sure a drain cover is installed over all floor drains in the basement.
- Keep landscaping maintained around the home. Do not allow bushes or trees to get so high that they create a pathway for squirrels and raccoons. Do not allow leaves or other debris to be piled up next to the house.
- Keep firewood away from the house.
- If you hear strange noises in ceilings or walls, it is likely that an unwanted animal has found a way in. It is important to find the entry point as soon as possible.
- Make sure windows and doors properly close. Use screens if possible and make sure they are tightly secured.

If you find bat in your house and someone was possibly exposed or unknowingly spent time in a room with it, it is important that the bat be captured safely and tested for rabies. If possible, try not to physically damage the bat's head while capturing it. Hitting the bat with a tennis racket, baseball bat or other hard item may damage it to the extent that may prevent laboratory testing.

Routine home maintenance and prompt elimination of nuisance animal entry points can potentially lessen the impact to your family, and ultimately, your wallet. Contact a local pest control company or nuisance trapper for assistance as needed.

Please visit [www.ccbh.net](http://www.ccbh.net) or call 216.201.2000 for more information.