

Managing Bats in School Buildings

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Bats can be found in almost all countries and in most regions of Manitoba. Bats seek out a variety of daytime retreats such as caves, rock crevices, buildings, mines, and trees. In winter, bats either hibernate or migrate to warmer climates.

All healthy bats try to avoid humans by taking flight and are not purposely aggressive. Most bats are the size of a mouse and use their small teeth and weak jaws to grind up small insects. People should avoid handling bats as several species have sharp teeth that can puncture skin if they are handled improperly.

School maintenance staff should be familiar with a bat management plan that will focus on preventing direct physical contact with bats. Staff and students should be taught to never touch a bat as any bat that can be easily approached is probably sick or injured. The best way to prevent contact is to maintain bat free buildings. The following measures can help prevent bats from entering buildings.



- Window screens should be maintained in good repair.
- Keep gymnasium doors closed as during early morning and evening, bats are searching for food and could inadvertently fly into the building to catch insects. If the doors are often used for ventilation, then a screen over the opening is highly recommended.
- Bats will usually find the easiest entry point for a quick in and out. The most common entry points include vents, windows, loose chimney flashing and through holes caused by damage or age. Seal off all possible entry points to prevent bats from getting inside school buildings.
- Consider offering an alternative by providing a bat house on adjacent property. The bat houses are easily set up and should face south or southeast and be at least 10 feet (3.0 meters) off the ground. Bats are highly beneficial to the local ecosystem because of their role as insect predators and their ability to reduce the mosquito population around schools. The common bat may consume 600 or more mosquitoes per hour.

Removing Bats from Buildings

Do not try to capture the bat unless you have been trained to handle bats. Notify the Supervisor of Maintenance about the location of a bat and request assistance. If the bat is in a classroom or gym, have all the occupants leave and close the doors. If the bat is in a hallway, isolate the hallway and close the doors to the adjoining rooms. Students and staff in adjacent rooms should remain there until the bat is captured and secured.

There are several steps necessary before removing bats:

- Try to get the bat to leave on its own by opening a door or window as close to the bat as possible. The bat will eventually sense the fresh air and fly outside where it can find food and water.
- Turn off anything that makes noise as loud noises may confuse the bat's echolocation system. This system allows bats

to move in pitch darkness and avoid obstacles. A bat may fly in circles around a room before discovering an open window.

- If the bat does not exit the area, it may be possible to capture the bat and release it outside. Put on thick gloves (leather) before attempting to capture the bat to avoid injury. Place an empty laundry or waste-paper basket over the bat and then slide a magazine or similar item between the bat and the wall or floor. A small, meshed net may also be used. Do not crush or injure the bat as they are a protected species under the *Wildlife Act*.
- Carry the container outside and release the bat near a tree branch or from an elevated location so that the bat can swoop down to take flight. Make certain the window or door is closed so that the bat does not return to the building.
- If necessary, contact a pest professional to remove the bat safely and completely.

Safely Clean Droppings and Remnants

Bats may carry rabies, but this is rare. The most dangerous risks come from their droppings which can host a wide variety of diseases and parasites. Bat guano can contain Histoplasmosis, which can cause serious respiratory infections in humans, and bats themselves can carry blood sucking bugs that can attack and infect humans. It is critical to maintain proper hygiene standards when cleaning and disposing of any bat droppings, as well as bat carcasses. To avoid contact with potential diseases or parasites, a system is required to remove bat guano safely:



- Use personal protection equipment (PPE) that will include a breathing mask, safety glasses and gloves.
- Vacuum up the guano. Do not sweep, as this can place spores in the air.
- Use appropriate cleaning products to get rid of any biological material. The products shall offer anti-fungal, antibacterial, and disinfectant properties. The cleaning should be repeated a second time to ensure all traces have been removed.
- Check the area to ensure all droppings and remnants have been removed. Any remaining biological matter can attract other pests including maggots, rats, and mice.
- Schools may decide to use private contractors to carry out the cleaning procedures. These contractors should have the necessary equipment and experience to perform the job.

