



328 Bethel Road, Fincastle, Virginia 24090
phone: 540-992-2940
CampBethelOffice@gmail.com
www.CampBethelVirginia.org



Bat in the Cabin! Risk, Response, Insurance & the VDH

Barry LeNoir, *Camp Bethel Director.* Barry@CampBethelVirginia.org

What do you do when you discover a bat in the (pick one) cabin/lodge/dorm/bunkroom? You'd better know what to do, because the Bat Sh**..., um, *GUANO* is about to hit the fan. And, *NO*, your liability insurance does *NOT* cover \$20,000 rabies vaccinations. *Yep, \$20,000... per person!* Lessons from 3 harrowing bat tales.

Part 1: Three Bats, Three Camps

Girl Scout Camp, 2005; "Camp" in a church, 2017; Camp Bethel 2016

Part 2: The Guano Hits the Fan

- Parent Communications: harder than you think.
- Virginia Department of Health
- Different Doctors, Differing Diagnoses
- Same hospital, wildly varying costs
- Insurance woes continue for 9 months

Part 3: The Bottom Line on Bats at Camp

1. Bat-proof any living quarters if possible (see back of page). Bats are not problematic in open-air huts.
2. Teach leaders and campers to do "bat-checks" with flashlights prior to going to bed. Check ceilings, corners, sills, eaves, etc.
3. DO NOT SLEEP or leave child unattended in a facility with a bat inside.
4. If you can, CATCH THE BAT (net & thick gloves; no skin contact!) and **keep it alive** (in a box, bag, etc.) and take it IMMEDIATELY to the Health Department. 48-72 hour delay OK for rabies testing.
5. Not rabid = NO SHOTS. Rabid = *Oh crap...*
6. Before each season, get "Camper Medical" insurance coverage for all participants! I recommend Special Markets Insurance Consultants, Inc., Stevens Point, WI (a subsidiary of Mutual of Omaha). OR, ask your insurer.
7. YES, bat houses are OK, but probably relegate them to the perimeter of your main campus.

Keeping Bats Out Of Your House:

The big brown bat is found through most of the USA and Canada. It feeds mostly on beetles. Some bats live in buildings, and there's no reason to evict them if there is little chance for contact with people. Bats must not be allowed into your home. It's best to contact animal control or wildlife conservation for assistance with "bat-proofing" your home. *Here are some DIY suggestions:*

- Examine your home for holes that bats might enter. Caulk any openings larger than a quarter inch by a half inch. Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft guards beneath attic doors, fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking, and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.
- Prevent bats from roosting in attics or buildings by covering outside entry points. Observe where the bats exit at dusk and keep them from coming back by loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting over these areas. Bats can crawl out and leave, but cannot re-enter. When all the bats are gone, the openings can be permanently sealed.
- Avoid doing this from May through August. If there are young bats in your attic, many of them can't fly and keeping the adults out will trap the young who will die or try to make their way into your rooms.
- Most bats leave in the fall or winter to hibernate, so these are the best times to "bat-proof" your home.

Story from _____ Church, summer 2017:

This summer we had the unfortunate experience of having a bat enter our facility at _____ Church. It took place during our _____ summer camp where students from all over come to do home repair ministry. When the bat was discovered, we had over 100 people sleeping in the area the bat was found.

We then discovered that one of our staff members had a potential bite on his arm and we sent him immediately to the emergency room. From there, we called the Health Department to report the situation, and that is when things really escalated to more of a panic level. We were told that the Health Department considered our campers to **all** have been exposed and they needed to seek treatment.

We left it up to each camper to decide with his or her families what to do once all of the information was presented. We then filed an insurance claim and found out that our insurance carrier would not cover any of the claims except the staff member that was actually bitten because there was no injury. This was upsetting to use because the Health Department was very direct in telling everyone to seek treatment.

This has been a large learning experience for us and we will take this knowledge moving forward to better our camp and the coverage we have here. We will also know how to more readily act on a bat situation. It is very important to have coverage for something like this happening.



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July 15, 2016

To Parents of Unit 2 Elementary Campers:

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding this week helping us to ensure the health and safety of each camper.

As you now know, a bat was seen flying in the StoneHOP bunkroom on Tuesday night at 9:40pm as they were preparing for bed. The counselors and leadership team were unsuccessful in finding and catching the bat, and all the girls were immediately relocated out of StoneHOP bunkroom Tuesday night and for the remainder of the week.

We do not know whether a bat was present on Sunday night and Monday night, and since we do not know, we must respond as if all the campers and staff were exposed to a potentially ill bat. For this reason, **please follow the recommendations of the Botetourt County Health Department and schedule a doctor's appointment for your child immediately.**

Here's what we know: No camper or staff reported coming into contact with the bat. The bat was not behaving erratically or abnormally. No bat feces were found in StoneHOP, and no bats were found for the remainder of the week, (we searched Wednesday, Thursday and Friday). Our Health Coordinator checked the exposed skin of all the campers and counselors in Unit 2 for markings.

Here's how we responded: Our directors were informed of the bat sighting on Wednesday. On Thursday morning, Camp Director, Barry LeNoir contacted Bobby Bernier and Corey Basham, Environmental Health Specialists at the Botetourt County Health Department (540-473-7204 or 540-473-8240). Per their instructions, Barry LeNoir personally called parents of all "exposed" campers on Thursday morning and instructed them to schedule a doctor's appointment for their child as soon as possible.

We have since heard from parents that different pediatricians/doctors have responded in varying ways to the possibility of exposure to a bat. Regardless of doctors' varied responses, **please follow the recommendations of the Botetourt County Health Department and schedule a doctor's appointment for your child immediately.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me directly at 540-992-2940 or barry@campbethelvirginia.org. Please also let me know how your specific doctor's office responds to this incident so that we can continue to improve our protocols for camper health and safety. Again, thank you for your help and cooperation.

Together, in Christ our hope,

Barry LeNoir
Camp Bethel Director

Following up with you: possible exposure to a bat
Camp Bethel <campbetheloffice@gmail.com>
7/16/16

to _____

As you know, the concern about a bat indoors is the potential for exposure to rabies, which is a VERY serious and fatal disease. A bat bite can be invisible and painless; one may not be aware they have had contact with a bat. In this situation, please take the greatest precaution. Please follow the recommendations of the Botetourt County Health Department and schedule a doctor's appointment for your child immediately.

In addition to the information contained in the attached letter given to all families of campers in Unit 2, a further interview with counselor _____ indicates she heard sounds in the early morning on Tuesday that could have been a bat. So we must assume that a bat could have present in the bunkroom overnight Monday night.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me directly at 540-992-2940 or barry@campbethelvirginia.org or CampBethelOffice@gmail.com. You are also welcome to contact Corey Basham, Senior Environmental Health Specialist at the Botetourt County Health Department, 540-473-7204 or 540-473-8240.

A reminder that you will also receive a certified letter from the Health Department.

Please do these three things:

1. E-mail me back to confirm that you have made or had an appointment with your doctor.
2. Let me know how your specific doctor's office responds to this incident so that we can continue to improve our protocols for camper health and safety.
3. Let me know what your doctor/caregiver informed you about availability of the treatment shots for your child, as we are hearing varying reports from different facilities.

Again, thank you for your help and cooperation, and thank you for providing the requested information.

Together, in Christ our hope,

Barry LeNoir
Camp Bethel Director

Camp Bethel
Event Center & Summer Camp
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www.CampBethelVirginia.org



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Botetourt County Health Department
21 Academy Street, POB 220
Fincastle VA 24090
Phone: (540) 473-8240 Fax: (540) 473-8242

July 15, 2016

Certified Mail No.: 7015 0640 0006 1756 0310

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Dear Mr./Ms. ~~X~~

It was reported to the Botetourt County Health Department on July 14, 2016 that your daughter was possibly exposed to a bat on July 13, 2016 and the bat is not available for rabies testing. It is necessary for her to seek medical attention with your private physician or any local hospital emergency room to determine exposure. The **Rabies Control Guidelines** issued by the *Virginia Office of Epidemiology* defines Human Exposure as follows: "Any bite, scratch or other situation where saliva or central nervous system (CNS) tissue of a potentially rabid animal enters an open, fresh wound or comes in contact with a mucous membrane by entering the eye, mouth, or nose. The touch or handling of a potentially rabid animal or another animal or inanimate object that had contact with a rabid animal does not constitute an exposure unless wet saliva or CNS material from the rabid animal entered a fresh, open wound or had contact with a mucous membrane."

The determination of a bat exposure is different from defining an exposure to a terrestrial mammal because bat bites are small and sometimes go unnoticed. A bat exposure may occur if:

1. Anyone who is bitten by a bat.
2. Anyone who awakens and finds a bat in their room.
3. You see a bat in the room of an unattended child.
4. You see a bat near a mentally impaired or intoxicated person.
5. Anyone has had direct contact with a bat and cannot rule out a bite.

In any of the above situations, the bat should be captured and submitted for testing if possible. If it is determined by your physician that your daughter was exposed to the rabies virus, you should follow the physician's recommendations. Do not wait for symptoms to appear. Rabies is usually a fatal disease once symptoms appear.

Please call this office at (540) 473-8240, if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert Bernier
Environmental Health Specialist Senior