

# What do you do if you find a bat in trouble?

## Helping bats and avoiding Australian Bat Lyssavirus

### Bats in Queensland

Flying foxes and microbats are both types of bats found in Queensland that contribute to our diverse ecosystem. Bats are nocturnal mammals that forage for food at night and return to their colonies during the day time.

### Role in the environment

Bats play a vital role in the spread and propagation of native trees and plants in our environment. This occurs as they are feeding during the night on various fruit, pollen and nectar.

### Dangers to bats

Bats can get stuck in netting used to cover fruit trees, on powerlines or in wire fencing. Pets may attack bats that they find on the ground.

### Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV)

About 1% of bats are infected with ABLV,<sup>1</sup> a virus very similar to the rabies virus. The virus is present in infected bats' saliva and brain tissue. Bats with ABLV are more likely to be on the ground, get trapped and injured in fences and netting, and fly erratically.<sup>2</sup> ABLV is fatal to humans if contracted through the bite or scratch of an infected bat.

### Help protect bats and humans!

Most bat bites and scratches are preventable and occur when a person is trying to help an injured or trapped bat or stop a pet or child from interacting with a bat.<sup>3</sup>

**When a person is scratched or bitten by a bat, the only way to test the bat for ABLV is through humane euthanasia, so a post-mortem can be conducted.**

Protect yourself and bats – never touch an injured or trapped bat! Always report any injured or trapped bat to RSPCA.

### What to do if you find an injured or trapped bat

- Remove any pets or children from the area
- Do not attempt to move or touch the bat as this will frighten the animal and it may bite or scratch in response
- Only trained and vaccinated bat rescuers should handle bats
- Call RSPCA at 1300 ANIMAL for a trained bat rescuer.

Touching bats puts both people and bats at risk

**Report injured bats to RSPCA at 1300 ANIMAL**



## Important points

- All touching situations (using gloves, a towel, a pillow case) could lead to a bite or scratch – if there's **no touch, there's no risk!**
- If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound with soap and water for 5 minutes and seek medical attention immediately
- Contact with bat faeces, urine or blood is not a risk for ABLV exposure

## What to do if a child or pet is interacting with a bat

- Remove the pet or child from the area, while being careful not to touch the bat
- Distract pets with food, treats or toys
- If the bat is injured or trapped – contact RSPCA
- If a child has bat bites or scratches wash the wound for five minutes with soap and water, then seek medical attention
- If a pet has been interacting with a bat, seek advice from your local veterinarian

## What to do if there's a bat in your house

- Bats trapped in a house will be scared and distressed
- **Do not try to catch the bat**
- Remove all people and pets from the room
- Seal the area by closing interior doors
- If the bat is injured or hasn't been able to exit on its own, call the RSPCA and wait for a trained bat rescuer

## More information

Queensland Health website: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au>  
Search for “bats” and “ABLV” for more information

1. Merritt T, Taylor K, Cox-Witton K, Field H, Wingett K, Mendez D, Power M, Durrheim D. Australian bat lyssavirus. Aust J Gen Pract. 2018;47(3):93-96
2. Paterson BJ, Butler MT, Eastwood K, Cashman PM, Jones A, Durrheim DN. Cross sectional survey of human-bat interaction in Australia: public health implications. BMC Public Health. 2014;14:58
3. Young MK, Banu S, McCall BJ, Vlack S, Carroll H, Bennett S, Davison R, Francis D. Potential exposure to Australian bat lyssavirus is unlikely to prevent future bat handling among adults in South East Queensland. Griffith Research Repository. 2018;(65)1

**Help me by not touching me – report any injured bat to 1300 ANIMAL**