



Resolution on Bats and Rabies

Adopted October 1999, Amended October 2014

WHEREAS, the North American Society for Bat Research is greatly concerned about public misperceptions regarding rabies in bats and the negative consequences for bats that are generated by those misperceptions; and

WHEREAS, the media and local public health agencies frequently overreact to incidental bat exposures, causing unnecessary eradication of bats or treatment of people not bitten by bats; and this results in actions and public perceptions that are costly to people, detrimental to bats, and provide no additional protection against rabies (Hout et al. 2008); and

WHEREAS, cases of rabies in humans in the United States and Canada are extremely rare, in large part due to robust public health systems that monitor and work to control the disease in domestic animals and wildlife (Brass 1994); and

WHEREAS, records maintained by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that between the years 1950–2007, only 56 cases of bat-born rabies transmission to humans occurred in the United States and Canada, which translates to 3.9 cases per billion person-years (De Serres et al. 2008); and

WHEREAS, in Mexico, the leading cause of rabies in humans is related to a single species, the common vampire bat, *Desmodus rotundus* (Schneider et al. 2009, Blanton et al. 2011); and

WHEREAS, most human rabies infections occur because victims are bitten and either do not realize the risk of being bitten or trivialize the wound and thus do not seek proper medical attention (De Serres et al. 2009); and

WHEREAS, those not seeking medical attention expose themselves to the possibility of severe illness and death (De Serres et al. 2009); and

WHEREAS, rabies is almost always fatal once contracted, but the disease is fully preventable if vaccine is administered soon after the bite of a rabid animal (Brass 1994).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the North American Society for Bat Research at the 44th Annual North American Symposium on Bat Research, Albany, New York, 22–25 October 2014, recommends the following steps be implemented to provide bats appropriate protections worldwide. We as members of NASBR commit to:

- a) continuing efforts to develop a national database of rabies exposures, treatments, and outcomes,
- b) making readily available to public health experts, up-to-date information on the local status of rabies in bats and the risk of exposure to rabid bats,

- c) making scientific and epidemiological reports and guidelines that are written for the average person readily available to the public, and
- d) supporting public education about bats and rabies that
 - i. strongly cautions members of the public never to handle bats or other wild mammals,
 - ii. warns people to practice appropriate first-aid measures and seek immediate medical attention, which may include post-exposure prophylaxis, after any actual or suspected bite of a mammal; and
 - iii. places the risk of human infection in perspective without trivializing the serious nature of this disease.

References

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The North American Society for Bat Research (NASBR) is a society dedicated to the promotion and development of the scientific study of bats (Chiroptera) in all its branches, including conservation and public education. NASBR is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization. For more information about the society and contact information visit www.nasbr.org