29 November 2018

Keep away from bats!

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service’s (SCHHS) Public Health Unit is warning locals and visitors not to handle bats, even if they seem sick, injured or dead.

Public health physician Dr Andrew Langley said bats could be affected by this hot weather, and people may want to help them. The best way to help is to call a wildlife carer.

“Bats can infect people with Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV). ABLV is like the rabies virus, and infection can be fatal,” Dr Langley said.

“ABLV can be spread from bats to people through a bat bite, scratch or by getting bat saliva in the eyes, nose or mouth.

“Not all bats carry the virus. However, you cannot tell whether a bat is infected by how it looks,” he said.

“Parents should make sure that children know not to touch bats.

“This year, 17 residents of the Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Gympie council areas have been bitten or scratched by a bat, and received treatment to prevent ABLV infection developing.”

If you (or your child) comes across a bat:

- Do not touch the bat, even if it seems to be dead.
- If the bat seems to need assistance (e.g. it seems sick, injured or stuck), contact a wildlife rescue organization which has vaccinated, trained bat carers.

If you or someone you know has been bitten or scratched by a bat, or had bat saliva in the eye, nose or mouth:

1) Wash the affected area gently and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 5 minutes
2) Apply an antiseptic (alcohol-based or iodine-based)
3) Promptly contact:
   - Your GP
   - 13HEALTH information line (Ph: 13 432584)
   - Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit (Ph: 1300 017 190)

For more information, see Queensland Health’s ABLV fact sheet

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