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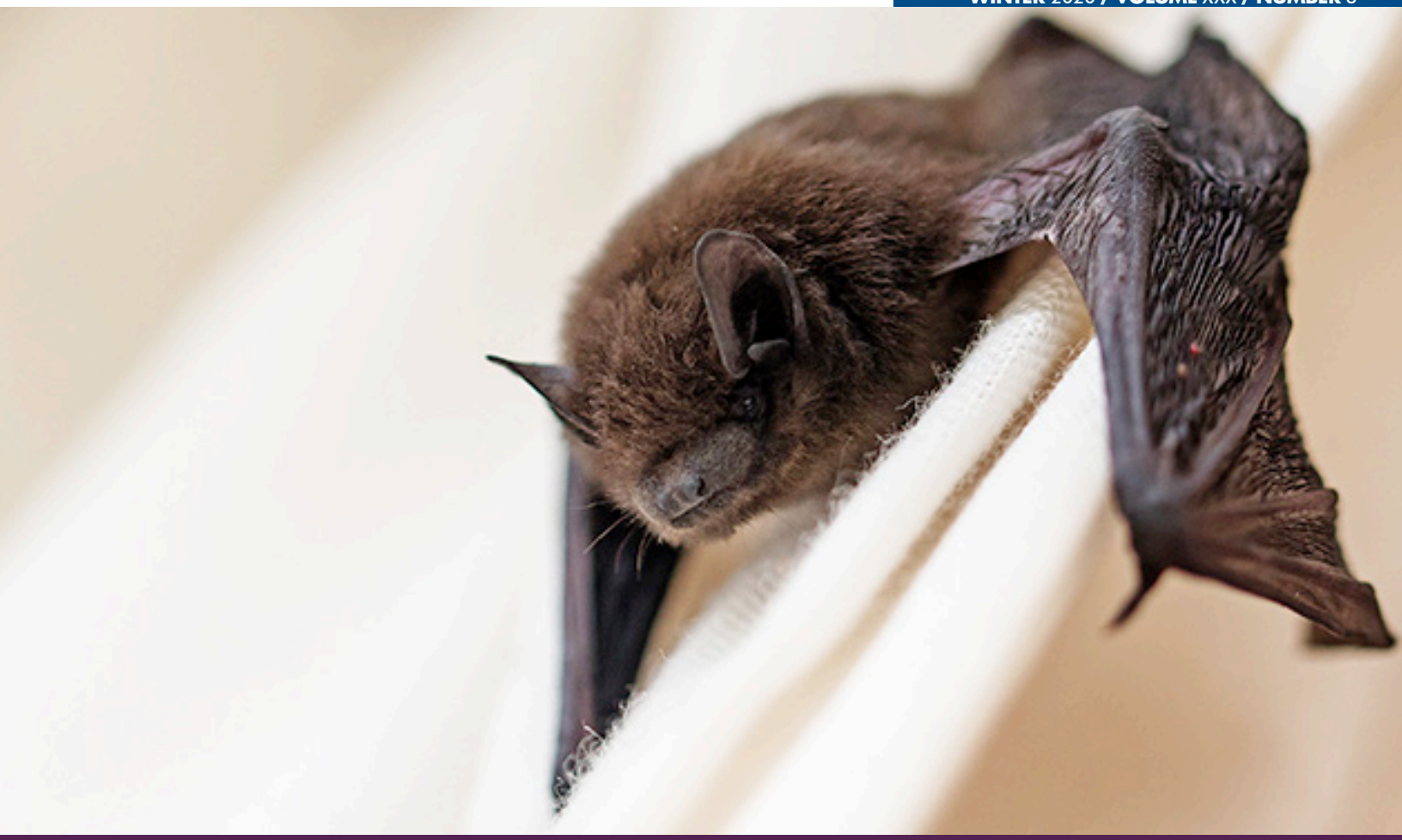


RABIES AWARENESS WITH A CAMP PERSPECTIVE

By Linda Ebner Erceg, RN, MS, PHN

In This Issue

Many camp professionals consider the bat a benign, friendly critter. Readers may have grown up with an occasional bat flying through the house and the dear things are often seen around camp. Despite the good done by bats in the natural world, the bat's "benign" days are over. The bat has become *persona non grata* in camp sleeping quarters, and showing a captive bat to interested campers — if done — should be done by appropriately trained staff wearing leather gloves and reminding campers not to touch. Something has changed.

That change has to do with exposure to rabies. Departments of Health typically consider a person presumptively exposed when that person wakes up in a room in which a bat is flying. The concern with rabies is genuine, because without appropriate medication attention, it is a

disease "ultimately resulting in death" (CDC, 2019). If the bat is captured and submitted for rabies testing, the concern about human rabies exposure waits for the results of that testing. But when the bat cannot be tested, presumptive exposure is assumed. That triggers the need for rabies immunizations.

To date, US deaths from rabies have been associated with bats (CDC, 2019), but other animals can also harbor the virus, most notably raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Worldwide, however, dog bites are most commonly associated with rabies. This may explain why international staff and campers are wary of the camp canine. Interestingly, people generally know when they've been bitten by animals like raccoons, skunks, and foxes — but that's not necessarily the case with bats. Their bites are tough to identify. Indeed, seeing or not seeing a suspected bat bite is *not* diagnostically significant (Heyman, 2015; CDC, 2019).

As expected, concern about bats and their potential to transmit rabies has kicked up mitigation practices within camps. "Bat proofing" camp sleeping areas tops the list. While some businesses provide bat-proofing services, many camp professionals do their own work using guidelines provided by entities such as the Department of Natural Resources, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (CDC.gov), and Bat Conservation International (batcon.org). The CDC has a PDF available specifically for camps; it includes bat proofing and commentary about using mosquito netting over beds (CDC, 2011).

Bats, however, are part of the natural setting at most camps, so totally eradicating them is problematic. One can work to limit the potential for exposure to rabies through bats, but the risk cannot be eliminated. In other words, the risk is inherent to many camp experiences. Consequently, there is increased reason for camp professionals to update their knowledge about bats, update risk-reduction practices used at camp, and become familiar with managing post-exposure rabies prophylaxis for campers and/or staff should the need arise. These are the topics of this article.

Understand the Scope of the Rabies Exposure Challenge

To more fully understand how a determination is made about rabies exposure in humans, talk with the appropriate person from the Department of Health of the state in which your camp is located. This is important because recommendations from the CDC are national in scope, but interpreted and implemented at the state level. Specifically talk about your concern with bats; learn what constitutes "presumptive exposure" insofar as bats are concerned. This baseline

information helps a camp shape an effective response. If campers are sleeping in a cabin and a counselor walks in to find a bat flying around, have all those sleeping people been "presumptively exposed" to rabies? What if, during the day, a camper spots a bat hanging from the peak of the roof inside the cabin; is that a presumptive exposure? What if a counselor picks up a bat bare-handed and shows it to campers; is that an exposure? The goal is to understand how the determination about exposure is made and the facts that color that determination process. Many state health departments word their exposure statements along the lines of "presumptive exposure to rabies is assumed when a person/people wake up in a room in which a bat is flying and the bat cannot be captured for testing."

If the bat can be captured for testing, Departments of Health are generally tolerant of waiting for the results of that test before initiating post-exposure prophylaxis. Ask how long it takes to get results from the testing process; potentially exposed people will want to know. If the bat cannot be caught — or simply gets away — then a decision of presumptive exposure will most likely be made.

Also find out where to take an animal for rabies testing. A local veterinarian can probably answer this question. The vet may also provide a service for packaging and submitting a captured animal to the appropriate testing location. This is especially helpful when testing is done at only one state lab and camp is geographically some distance from that site. The use of courier services and electronically delivered test results help keep wait times to a minimum. These services often have a price, so ask about that too.

Update your knowledge about post-exposure prophylaxis for rabies. Should an exposure occur, campers, staff, and parents will have questions. Information should be from a reputable source such as your Department of Health, the camp's physician, and/or the Centers for Disease Control. Know about the post-exposure rabies prophylaxis process. While rabies immunization used to be a series of five injections given over four weeks, it is now a series of four injections done over two weeks. The day of the first immunization is followed by additional rabies injections on days 3, 7, and 14. In addition, a dose of immune globulin is given with the first injection (CDC, 2011).

Determine where one goes to get rabies immunizations. These are typically done through emergency rooms, not clinics. While the hospital's pharmacy may have enough rabies vaccine for one or two people, find out what happens should an entire cabin group need the injections. This may be the point when the Department of Health can be a great ally, as was the case for a camp with more than 30 exposed people. In that case, their Department of Health assisted with getting enough rabies vaccine and gamma globulin to the immunization site.

Camp administrators are urged to talk with their liability and worker compensation insurance carrier(s) before experiencing an incident to determine what support will be available. Specifically ask how to file a claim; rabies shots and gamma globulin are expensive.

Update Staff Training

Along with bat proofing designated sleeping areas, update the education provided to staff about interaction with wild animals, especially those posing threats like rabies. Develop a "bat-catching protocol" that's used to capture bats inside of buildings. Information about capturing is available online; the CDC has a particularly good printed piece (2011). It includes using supplies like leather gloves, a long-handled insect (not fish) net, and a container with a tight-fitting lid (see Figure 1, Sample Bat-Catching Procedure). Such "bat kits" can be prepared ahead of time so they're easy to grab when needed.

Make sure all camp staff get trained regarding bats; don't forget maintenance and food service staff. Talk through the process that will unfold should a bat be captured, as well as what will happen if a bat "gets away." This conversation will be especially helpful should a bat escape capture efforts, something that happened at two camps. The staff who valiantly tried to capture the bat were unable to do so. It was tough knowing that people needed to get rabies immunizations because of the failed effort. However, because of the way camp leadership handled the situation, the staff understood the distinction between their valiant effort and an escaped, artful-dodger bat.

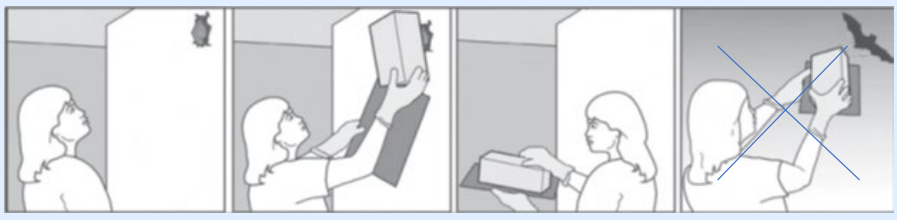
Figure 1.
Sample Bat-Catching Procedure for Camp Staff

Goal:

- To remove bats from rooms in which people sleep.
- To capture a bat present in the room when people who are sleeping there wake and see the bat. This bat will be sent for rabies testing.

To Capture a Bat:

1. Instruct people who may remain in the room to leave; take care that the bat doesn't escape when the people leave. Have someone get the bat-catching kit.
2. Watch the bat; wait for it to roost.
3. Once the bat-catching kit arrives, put on the leather gloves; have your container and a flat piece of cardboard handy.
4. Slowly approach the bat and cover it with the container or net.
5. Keeping the container flat against the wall, slide the lid or cardboard between the wall and the bat.
6. Once the cardboard is in place, lift the container and the cardboard away from the wall. Carefully exchange the cardboard with the container's lid, sealing the bat inside the container. Do NOT poke holes in the container; the bat will be fine with the air that's in there already.
7. Inform the camp director and hand off the bat in its sealed container to [insert name of camp person who will take care of captured bats].
8. Return the bat-catching kit to its storage spot; replace items as needed so the kit is ready for the next capture.



USING A LONG-HANDLED NET
Use the net to capture a bat in hard-to-reach areas. Allow the bat to fall into the net, twist the net to retain the bat, and — using gloves — drop/push the bat into the container. Place the lid on the container and follow Steps 7 and 8 (above).

NEED A LONG-HANDLED NET?
Available from providers like Amazon, put "long-handled bug/butterfly net" into the site's search line to discover available options.

Communicate with Stakeholders

Communication with impacted people will be a crucial component of a camp's response to a rabies exposure incident. This task is often led by a camp administrator (director). The camp nurse may provide support, but key messages must come through the camp administrator because a potential rabies exposure also has the potential to be a significant public relations issue. Stakeholders heading the list include impacted campers and their parents, camp staff, and the camp's liability insurance carrier. Consequently, key messages and scripted conversations may be utilized.

If the offending bat has been caught and sent for testing, camps should call parents of impacted campers to tell them of the exposure and that the offending bat has been sent for rabies testing. Communicated information includes comment about when test results are expected, how those results will be communicated to the parent, and provides the name of a camp professional and their phone number should questions arise in the interim. This notification is eased if the camp's pre-camp parent information includes information about inherent risks associated with camp life.

If the offending bat was not caught, communication with parents focuses on informing them of the exposure incident, the child's need for post-exposure rabies prophylaxis, and obtaining the parent's permission to start that process. While a parent's verbal permission may be heard via phone, direct them to email their written permission. Consult your legal counsel regarding this. Also note the difference between initial notification and follow-up calls. The initial call to parents of exposed campers typically focuses on the fact that the exposure incident occurred and the need to start the child on the rabies post-exposure immunization series. Follow-up communication can provide additional information. Indeed, one may not have complete information when initially telling parents about the incident.

Communication tips from camps that have been through a rabies exposure incident include the following:

- Verify baseline information before initiating parent contact. This might include a call to the Department of Health to verify that an exposure incident has, indeed, occurred. Recognize that one may not know all follow-up information when placing early calls, especially to impacted parents. Be prepared to acknowledge this.
- Ask your Department of Health representative to prepare a letter — perhaps an electronic version so it's quicker to disseminate — that outlines the rationale for the rabies immunization series. Getting the immunizations is a personal choice, but Departments of Health are sensitive about making sure everyone is appropriately informed.
- Inform the parents of impacted campers. There will be a series of communications with these parents, so think through this process. This is also one of the times when the integrity and quality of a camp's relationship with parents makes a difference.
  - o The initial contact informs parents that their child has been presumptively exposed to rabies and, as a result, the Department of Health wants the child started on rabies injections. Obviously, this is a heavy message to deliver, let alone for a parent to hear. A scripted message may help the person(s) making these calls provide a consistent and effective message (see Figure 2, Sample Script for Notifying Parents of Exposed Campers). Be prepared to leave an appropriate voice message should the parent not answer their phone. Also be prepared for a parent "to think about it" or want to consult the other parent. Provide all parents with the name and phone number of the camp professional who will handle their call-backs; these *will* come.
  - o Stay in touch with impacted parents; they need fairly consistent updates from the camp spokesperson. Depending on your relationship with the group, updates might be provided by email supported by individual one-on-one calls as needed.
  - o Resident camps should note that parents often need to talk with their child, especially if the rabies injections are given/started while the child is at camp. Be ready to organize this in a way that complements the camp's capacities.
  - o Day camps have the advantage of children being in their home communities. Parents can often both inform their child about the need for rabies shots and be with their child for the injections. Talk about this to make sure what the camp assumes is happening concurs with the parents' understanding.
- Inform camp staff. Get them ready to support impacted people as well as the process. Remind them of your camp's media policy and the need to protect the privacy of impacted parties.
- Talk with impacted campers.
  - o In resident camps, this conversation is often led by the camp director and supported by the camp nurse and the cabin counselors of the

Figure 2.
Sample Script for Notifying Parents of Exposed Campers

Name of Camper: _____

Date/Time of Parent Contact: _____

Name of Custodial Parent Contacted: _____

Hello. This is Linda Erceg calling from Camp Anywhere. May I please speak with Laura's mom or dad?

I want you to know that Laura is OK, but there was an incident that we need to tell you about. It happened early this morning. One of the counselors in your child's cabin woke around 3:00 a.m. and saw a bat flying in the cabin. We were unable to capture it. The Minnesota Department of Health considers this to be a presumptive exposure to rabies and, as a result, would like your child started on rabies vaccinations. MDH knows that your child is going home tomorrow; consequently, your child should start the immunizations through your physician at home. Please call your physician today and alert them so the immunization process can begin within the next few days.

You'll be receiving an email from me that provides more details as well as contact information for both myself and the Minnesota Department of Health. Let me make sure I have a correct email address for you — what is the best one to use?

Email: _____

Are there any questions I might answer for you right now?
(Record questions and information provided for your records)

You may have questions as time goes along. You can contact me; again, my name is Linda Erceg, and my phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Signature of Staff Member
Who Talked with Parent: _____

Photo courtesy of Camp Cherith in the Carolinas, Clemson, SC

impacted youth. Telling campers that their parents have already been informed (assuming this is true) often helps. Straightforwardly respond to their questions.

  - o Day camps may not need to talk with impacted campers; parents often want this task.

- Talk with the other campers who were not impacted. These campers need to know the basics of what's going on delivered in a manner that complements their developmental capacity. Undoubtedly, they will be friends with some of the impacted campers.
- Inform the camp's liability and/or worker compensation carrier(s). These companies often open a case file for anticipated claims and may provide a phone number for parents should the need arise.
- Inform parents of non-exposed campers. Campers may write home or call using their hidden cell phones. As a courtesy, consider emailing these parents. Let them know that they may hear about a recent rabies exposure incident, something parents of impacted campers have already been informed about. You'd like them to be aware so they aren't caught off guard should their child pose questions. Stress the camp's continued efforts with bat proofing and ongoing concern with safeguarding the health of campers. "We'd like you to know" goes a long way.

When Rabies Shots Are Given to Campers While at Camp

The decision about starting rabies immunizations while campers are still at camp is generally made with an eye on the date the campers leave camp. Obviously, if the exposed campers will be at camp for at least the next two weeks, the Department of Health (DOH) will want the immunizations started (and perhaps completed) before campers head home. Consult the DOH about this. If campers will go home fairly soon, the DOH may recommend that the child start the injections at home. Then there's the middle ground, in which some shots are given while the child is at camp and the remaining are completed at home. Each scenario has follow-up points.

If the four rabies inoculations can be completed at camp before the camper goes home, then the designated camp professional — most commonly the camp nurse — should contact the place where the immunizations are given and a) make sure they know the number of people to be injected, b) the approximate weight of each person (the gamma globulin dose is based on client weight), and c) when the individuals will arrive for the first immunizations. Some providers are willing to set up a special location and bring in additional staff when groups must be immunized, so talk about this if several campers and/or staff are involved. It may also be necessary to enlist the DOH's help to secure enough rabies serum and/or gamma globulin if multiple people have been exposed.

The first time campers and staff go in for the immunizations will take a bit of time. A record will be set up for each person, and each individual will receive two serums: rabies and gamma globulin. While the rabies injection goes into the person's arm, the gamma globulin will go into their gluteus maximus (their butt). The quantity of gamma globulin needed is based on weight, so most people will have at least two of these injections. Clients do much better if they know about this ahead of time, so while the camp director may be focused on getting people registered, the camp nurse has a significant role in adequately preparing campers and staff. A word to the wise: if someone is extremely afraid of injections, have a skilled staff member work one-on-one with this individual, consider keeping this individual separated from others, and have them go through the injection process first. There's nothing worse than waiting for a perceived "bad" thing to happen.

If individuals will only partially complete the rabies series before going home, then it becomes necessary to coordinate with parents for the series to be completed at home. Parents will want to know when

remaining injections should be given and how to arrange for them. Most often this is a matter of talking with the camper's physician who, in turn, orders the remaining injections. The DOH might help coordinate this process should many campers and staff be involved and/or if campers/staff live out of state or out of country. The medical staff who will oversee completion of the rabies series need to be informed ahead of time so enough rabies serum is available and appointments can be scheduled on required days. Again, communication between camp and parents is crucial for a smooth transition.

When people receive rabies immunizations while at camp — whether or not the series is completed — camp nurses are reminded to get copies of all pertinent paperwork and pass this information along to parents.

When the DOH gives permission for people to wait and start the rabies series when they get home, ask the DOH to provide a letter that explains as much to parents. Some parents go to Google and see statements such as "immediately start rabies prophylaxis." Having a DOH letter that explains why it's OK to wait until getting home really helps. In addition to that letter, parents appreciate coaching for their at-home follow-up. Tell them to contact their child's physician to initiate the process. Sometimes the MD's office staff will facilitate the process; at other times, the MD may refer the parent to the local emergency room. The key is to let the appropriate medical staff know ahead of time so adequate serum is available and appointment times can be arranged.

When Staff Need Post-Exposure Rabies Prophylaxis

Assuming the staff member's exposure incident occurred while doing their job, the camp's worker compensation insurance would apply. Staff need the same coaching and attention regarding rabies immunizations that campers receive, but their billing should be directed per instructions from the camp's worker compensation carrier. This is particularly important if staff receive rabies injections

after leaving camp (e.g., following the end of their work agreement). One camp gave affected staff members a letter to show their at-home provider; it provided information about the exposure incident, the address for submitting the bill and, if needed, the name/phone number of a person who could respond to provider questions.

Maintain Records of Your Actions

Risk management practice includes developing and maintaining adequate records. Consult your camp's liability insurance carrier for coaching on this process. The insurance company may already have forms to facilitate the record process. Start keeping written records at the point a bat is found in a sleeping area. Even if the bat is a nuisance bat (no one was presumptively exposed), record where it was found, who handled it and how, the rationale behind the decision about submitting the animal for rabies testing or not, and efforts taken to block places where the bat may have entered.

When an exposure incident takes place, gather the same information, but also develop a record specific to each exposed person. This individual record focuses on that person's experience; it should summarize conversations, phone calls (including attempts to call), and the individual's reaction to the rabies prophylaxis process. Various people may make entries to the individual record (each dated and signed), but the record is specific to a given person. Individual records are complemented by the file (record) of the incident itself. The incident file includes a broader synopsis of actions, date and time of those actions, and who did them. Add copies of emails and other materials provided to people involved with the incident. Individual records become part of the overarching incident file.

Potential Exposure to Rabies: An Inherent Risk of the Camp Experience?

The concept of "inherent risk" refer to those risks that arise from the environment and during human activities that occur in that environment. Inherent risks are impossible to eliminate. Indeed, doing so would change the experience. When we consider the camp experience, there are some inherent risks — like the presence of bats — that arise from the camp environment. Yes, there are things one can do to reduce the likelihood that an exposure to bats will be impactful. From a legal perspective, one probably has a duty to do those things, but it is not possible to totally eliminate the risk. It's inherent.

Our camp world is hesitant about communicating inherent risks such as the potential for rabies exposure through bats. We articulate risks associated with specific

activities but have largely been silent about those associated with the camp's environment. It's time to do otherwise. Talk with your camp's leadership team and legal counsel. Determine the inherent risks of your camp program that are associated with location (think flora and fauna), then review the strategies you utilize to minimize, if not eliminate, those risks. Finally, consider how to inform potential clients and staff so they more fully understand the impact of a decision to be at camp. Doing so can make a big difference when working through incidents like rabies exposure.

Is this challenging? Yes. Is there risk in doing it? Yes. How one communicates the message(s) makes a difference. We want people to understand the impact of their decision to have a camp experience. While this article focuses on bats and responding to post-exposure rabies prophylaxis, the silver lining is that many good reasons for camp exist. In the resulting cost-benefit analysis, a camp experience still comes out on top.

Many thanks to the camp professionals who shared their bat and rabies shot stories. Their shared perspectives contributed to fleshing out our knowledge and provided tips for effectively managing an exposure incident. Camp professionals with additional information and/or comments can email Linda Erceg at erceg@campnurse.org.

Photo courtesy of Cheley Colorado Camps, Estes Park, CO

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Rabies Exposure or Not?

Nothing is ever simple.

Minnesota's Department of Health, like many others, considers it an exposure to rabies when "a person wakes up in a room in which a bat is flying." That's known as a "case definition." We are instructed to catch the bat and submit it for rabies testing or, if that's not possible, the individual(s) is considered to have a presumptive exposure to rabies and is, as a result, directed to prophylactically begin rabies inoculations.

So, what's the decision when:

- It's rest hour? A couple campers are sleeping but most are awake, and they see a bat begin flying around the cabin. The kids who are awake obviously know whether that bat came in contact with them. But what about those who were sleeping? Is it sufficient to rely on the testimony of the awake campers who say, "No, the bat didn't go near the sleeping campers; it just flew around in the rafters"? The offending bat wasn't caught; it got away.
- A counselor returns to the cabin before midnight and sees a bat flying around? They follow the camp protocol; the "bat catchers" come to do their thing, but the darn bat disappears. Everyone vacates the cabin; they sleep someplace else while the bat catchers sit in the cabin waiting for the bat to fly. Dawn arrives and the bat still hasn't made its presence known. After breakfast, the camp's maintenance staff joins the watchful bat catchers and they begin a systematic search of the cabin. At mid-morning a bat is found wedged into a crevice near the ceiling joists. It's removed and submitted for rabies testing — but was that the same bat as seen last night? Has too much time lapsed, enough so one must consider the potential that this is a different bat, thus raising the question of an escaped bat and, consequently, triggering the need for rabies shots for those who were sleeping in that cabin?
- Sleeping under the stars, especially on nights with meteor showers or when the Northern Lights display, is a highlighted camp event? Campers and staff are doing just that, sleeping under the stars as they enjoy nature's splendor. A counselor wakes during that pre-dawn time when darkness is just beginning to wane and sees bats flying overhead in search of their daytime roost. Do the sleeping campers and staff now need rabies shots?

These all happened at a camp. The incidents were brought to the state's Department of Health so that official entity, the one that created the state's case definition, could make a decision about the need to start people on rabies inoculations. Risk managers recognize this as transferring the risk, a more comfortable place to be when things fall into "gray" areas. In these situations, the decisions were as follows:

- The kids sleeping during rest hour met the criteria for the case definition; the campers who were awake did not. Consequently, parents of the sleeping campers were informed of the Department of Health's recommendation that their children be prophylactically started on rabies shots. Factors that influenced this decision were the age of the campers and the presence of counselors who were also sleeping rather than actively observing the campers.
- The bat found wedged into the cabin's ceiling joist was accepted as "the bat" seen flying during the night. The amount of time between seeing and finding the bat and the fact that no other bats were found during the search — yes, the team finished searching the cabin even after finding that first bat — made a difference.
- For the campers and staff sleeping under the stars, it was determined that they did not meet the case definition. No one was "sleeping in a room."

As camps become more articulate about the inherent risks associated with a camp experience (the presence of bats is certainly inherent to most camp experiences) and as we cope with incidents that fall into the gray zone of decision-making, situations like these hone our critical thinking (e.g., consideration of the age of campers, the presence of observing staff) and remind us to draw on resources such as the Department of Health.

Photo courtesy of Raymond Cecil III, Anacoco, LA

PREPARE LIFEGUARDS FOR TAKEOFF AT YOUR CAMP AQUATICS PROGRAM

By Cathy Scheder, EdD

Last spring, I had lunch with an old high school friend of mine who had recently switched careers. After almost 30 years as a paramedic/firefighter, he had an opportunity to pursue his lifelong dream career of becoming a commercial airline pilot. As a private recreational pilot, he had logged thousands of hours in small planes since we were in high school, but nothing prepared him for the difficulty of what it took to become qualified as a commercial airline pilot. The airline industry is rigorous (thankfully) in the training and expectations of the flight crew. He spent the better part of a year in classes and simulators before he even stepped onto a plane. And even when he did become certified to fly, he co-piloted first, learning from experienced pilots before he became qualified to captain his first flight. There is no room for error in piloting a plane, or catastrophic events can happen. The fact is that commercial pilots are responsible for the lives of everyone on their planes, not just themselves. It's no different for lifeguards and waterfront staff.

Lifeguards are trained in physical and strategic skills for rescue response and participate in simulations during their classes in a controlled environment. When they step onto your waterfront or pool deck for the first time, the game changes, and they are now responsible for everyone who takes part in an activity — in, on, or under the water. There is no room for error or catastrophic events can happen. A camp director's job is to not only make sure they have the necessary certifications but provide them continued opportunities for training and skill development — and not just physical skills, but cognitive skills as well. A split-second hesitation in response, or not recognizing someone in trouble, can mean the difference between a successful rescue and a catastrophic outcome.

Note: Some of the content in the rest of the article are excerpts from Waterfront Management for Camp and Recreation Programs (2nd edition)*, written by the author, published in 2020.*

Finding and Hiring Waterfront Staff

Spring is one of the most hectic times of year for full-time camp staff (outside of the summer program season). Heavy recruiting of campers and staff are competing priorities, and hiring staff sometimes feels like a race to the finish. A word of caution: do not assume that just because you hire a staff member who is a certified lifeguard and check it off your list, that means a) they are qualified for that role, or b) they are qualified to serve in other capacities on the waterfront such as canoe, kayak, sailing, paddle-boarding, or as ski instructors or lifeguards. It just means they have passed a lifeguard course. The only way to know if they are qualified is to get them in the water and see what they can do, and if they can do it successfully. And if they have only had pool experience and have not yet been involved in your lake, oceanfront, pond, or river, they are not yet qualified. But let's start with who you're hiring.

Lifeguard vs. Watercraft Guard

American Camp Association (ACA) standards identify two main titles of aquatic "guards" — Swim lifeguards (ST.12.1) and Watercraft guards (ST.15.1). Swim lifeguards are identified as staff who are certified to guard swimming activities — "To guard each swimming activity, does the camp provide a person who has current certification as a lifeguard by a recognized certifying body" (ACA, 2019). Lifeguards certified by a nationally recognized organization such as the American Red Cross or YMCA are trained to guard swimming activities; nothing else. They are trained for swimming rescues only.

What is a "watercraft guard"? There is no certification titled "watercraft guard." ACA uses this title to describe certified personnel providing supervision in areas other than swimming. The term "watercraft guard" is a catchall for the purpose of identifying all those other jobs outside the swimming area that can include but are not limited to:

- boating
- waterskiing
- wakeboarding
- kneeboarding
- sailboarding
- stand-up paddle boarding
- SCUBA diving
- rafting
- tubing

"Watercraft guards" as identified by ACA are those staff who supervise all those other watercraft activities such as canoeing, kayaking, sailing, windsurfing, waterskiing, etc. "To guard each watercraft activity for day and resident camp programs and for youth groups, does the camp provide a person who holds one of the following:

A. Current instructor rating in the appropriate craft from a recognized certifying body;

B. Current lifeguard training from a nationally recognized certifying body; or

C. Other acceptable certification" (ACA, 2019)

What does this mean in terms of your waterfront? You need to be cognizant of who you are hiring and for what position. Recognize that ACA standards do identify a qualified lifeguard can fill these positions (option B). However, please be aware that a lifeguard is only trained to monitor and supervise swimming areas and perform swimming rescues. Certified lifeguards are not trained to perform rescues for these other areas of the camp or recreational program, unless they have completed a waterfront module as part of their certification. Even then it does not cover specific boating rescues. Lifeguards have no training in how to conduct a rescue when equipment such as boats, skis, sails, masts, and boards could be a complicating factor. Ideally, if you can hire staff who have multiple certifications in these areas, that is your best approach. The author does recognize that this is not always practical. So, start with staff certified in lifeguard training (either before your program starts or during your training), and then work to get them qualified in other areas such as waterskiing, sailing, canoeing (flatwater or fast water), kayaking, etc.

Photo courtesy of Camp Cherith in the Carolinas, Clemson, SC

Certified Does Not Equate to Qualified

Now, let's go back to the difference between being certified and being *qualified*. My friend, the pilot, was certified to fly for commercial airlines but did not *qualify* to captain a plane until he had spent time in the actual cockpit flying with an experienced pilot. The same is true of your waterfront staff. Getting a certification in lifeguard training or other aquatic activity means they have demonstrated they have the physical skills and have learned the process of effecting a rescue — they may not yet have had time on the job if they

are a brand-new lifeguard. They need time (either practice through in-service or actual time on the job) to get them qualified to do the job you are asking them to do. Or maybe they logged time working in an aquatics environment, but is it the same as your waterfront or pool setting or different? You need to ensure that someone qualified (a lifeguard instructor) at your facility (or find someone at another camp or aquatics facility who is an instructor) confirms they have the skills to do the job at your site.

Start with Skills Verification

ACA standards require you to verify the skills your staff's certifications say they have. ST.15.2: "Does the camp require that every camp watercraft guard demonstrate skill in water rescue and emergency procedures for the type of water and activities conducted?" (ACA, 2019). Ensuring that staff members have the appropriate skills is accomplished through a skills verification check (even if they are repeat staff). If you hire a lifeguard or a watercraft guard in your camp or program and do not verify their skills, you can potentially increase the likelihood of injury or death resulting from staff inexperience or inability to perform a rescue. As a result, you may increase your liability exposure following the incident (including potential litigation). Two important aspects for verification of the Swim Lifeguard Skills standard are the following: If your staff have recently been through lifeguard training and you or someone on your staff who is qualified as a *current lifeguard instructor* (someone who knows how to determine

Photo courtesy of Sunshine Campus, Rush, NY

Photo courtesy of Newport Sea Base, Newport Beach, CA

the competency of the skills) have seen staff skills in the water, you can document appropriately that you have verified their skills. If, however, you have sent staff to another camp or organization for their training and you personally have not seen their competence in the water, you need to verify and document their skills, even though they just completed their training.

Preparing Staff for Your Aquatic Environment

Before you even make an offer to a staff member you want to hire, you need to be honest about the type of aquatic environment they will be working in, if only for their own understanding. Guarding in an aquatic area other than a pool setting (which anecdotally is where most lifeguards are trained) is different. Wind, waves, tides, clarity of the water (or lack of clarity), vegetation, and temperature all play a major role. Rescues may be different depending on the depth, size, and layout of your swimming area. Outdoor pools are not indoor pools, and glare from the sun and surface disturbance from the wind are major factors in how well the guards may be able to see your participants in the water. Wearing thicker clothes such as sweatshirts when it's cooler outside is fine (not usually recommended) as long as your guards know they must perform a rescue immediately, not after they undress down to their swimsuits. If they are going to wear sweats on a cooler day, they better be prepared to rescue and swim in those sweats — which means if you allow it, they better be practicing rescues in sweats.

Training and In-Service

Training is one of the most critical components to managing the waterfront. Through your skills verification you've determined whether staff members have the skills necessary to perform the job for which they were hired and have identified any additional training your staff may need before participants arrive (during pre-camp or pre-season training) that is specific to the body of water and type of activities within your program. Now you need to focus on any supplemental training unique to your waterfront and how you continue to keep staff (lifeguards as well as other waterfront staff or watercraft guards) trained. Skills practice, teaching methods, equipment care and maintenance, and team building are all critical components to consistent and thorough training. Especially important is continued physical conditioning, whether that's through swimming laps or cross-training such as running or biking.

Keep in mind that in-service training is designated time to review skills with your staff and let them practice, which will help them to respond quickly and efficiently. Time designated for training is not the time to do paperwork or have a staff meeting. It is the time to practice and rehearse rescue skills and emergency action plans. Ideally, you should strive for at least one hour of in-service training a week, including:

- rescue skills
- assessment of injury
- review of policies and procedures
- practicing emergency drills and, most importantly
- physical conditioning

The more frequently they practice together, the better they will be at responding to any emergency on the water. Your waterfront director should create a consistent training plan for all aquatics staff.

The waterfront or pool setting can be one of the most popular areas in your camp program. Hiring staff who are certified or have the skills to become certified, providing a strong skills verification check, and developing a comprehensive and consistent training and in-service program that raises the bar from being certified to being qualified prepares your staff to "captain" your aquatics program. Now sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight (as best you can during your busy summer).

Cathy Scheder, EdD, is the managing partner with Second Nature Partners, LLC, an educational and consultation firm specializing in camp and recreation programs. She is an expert in aquatics risk management for the camp and recreation fields and is a faculty member with Expert Online Training. She spent more than 20 years in the camp and youth development field as a waterfront director, program director, and camp director, and is the author of Waterfront Management for Camp and Recreation Programs *(2nd edition). You can reach her at secondnaturepartners@gmail.com.*

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Photo courtesy of Camp Mary White, Mayhill, MN

THE INS AND OUTS OF HOSTING A SERVICE DOG AT CAMP

By Samantha Clark

This article is meant to complement the March 2019 *CampLine* article on the legal obligations surrounding service animals at camp, "Service Animals at Camp. Yes. And. But." by Catherine Hansen-Stamp and Charles R. Gregg. Please refer to that article first before reading this one.

So, you have decided to host a service animal at camp. Now what? This article is meant to demystify the hands-on, day-to-day aspects of hosting a service animal, specifically a service dog, during a camp session. This refers only to service dogs, not emotional support animals. These are working dogs that are necessary for the camper's health and perform a specific function in their medical well-being.

I. Preparation, Preparation, Preparation

As with anything at camp, preparation is the key to success in hosting a camper or family that utilizes a service dog. Think about your campsite, your staff, and your other participants (campers and families). Tackling this holistically will only help make the session run smoother for everyone involved, including the service dog.

First, develop a policy and forms to collect information about the service dog and the camper's use of the dog. Think of this as a camper application for another kind of camper — a much furrier camper. In this form and your policy, spell out the information you will need about the dog to make the camper and the dog successful, namely:

- Clarification of the dog's role with the camper. What is the dog responsible for? This will help guide you as to where the dog needs to be when. The dog is working, so what is its function? Does it detect seizures? Help the camper navigate the environment? Etc.
- Information about the dog's temperament. Most service dogs are very well-mannered, which is a large part of the reason they have been chosen to be service animals. However, some service

dogs are much more protective of their owners than others, and this is something you will want to know.

- When does the dog need to be with the camper? At all times? At the horse barn (you will need to prepare the horses then)? At the ropes course?
- Can the dog be unsupervised?
- Can the camper take care of the dog's needs (feeding, cleaning up after the dog, etc.)? If not, you need to factor this into your staffing for the session. It is also a good idea to provide the participants with a map of where the dog can relieve itself and where to dispose of the waste. This is easy and inclusive.
- Introduction and interactions with the dog. How would the family/camper like their dog introduced to the camp community? Can others pet the dog? If so, when can they pet the dog? This is important: often others are asked not to pet service dogs because they are "on duty," performing the function they are trained to do, and should not be distracted.
- Vaccination information. Collect the dog's vaccination records just like you would for a camper/family attending camp.

Have your program and medical staff review this form before the dog arrives at camp so that everyone is prepared with the information and can do any necessary follow-up before arrival day.

Next, a dog in camp is probably not the norm, so you need to prepare the rest of the camp community. The goal should be that the camper is not answering questions about their service animal. The use of a service dog can make a child feel "othered," so adults should aim to field questions, and preparing beforehand is the best way to head off any misdirected inquiries.

Staff training, staff meetings, and opening campfire are good times to introduce information about the service dog and the camper's use of the dog to the camp community. Information to share includes:

- Information everyone needs to know to make the camper successful.
- Explain what task or tasks the dog is trained to do. This way, everyone understands the dog's job.
- Detail how your staff and other participants are expected to interact with the dog.
- Check with other participants about their feelings toward dogs. Is anyone afraid or allergic? If so, you will want to house these participants separate from the camper with the dog. If allergies are an issue, you may also want to put some air purifiers in the cabins/dining hall/other closed activity areas for the session to help alleviate this.

II. Day in the Life

Your site is ready, you have collected information on the service dog, you have prepared others in the camp community, and you are ready for arrival day. Now what? Because you have spent so much time on preparation, welcoming the service dog should go smoothly. A good idea is to assign a staff member who will be with the camper and the dog for the session, and who will meet the family on arrival. That way, any important information can be relayed right to the person who will oversee the dog for the session, and nothing will be lost. All questions should be asked at this point as well, including if any information on the dog or the camper's use of the dog has changed since the application process.

Some thoughts to keep in mind during the camp session:

- Service dogs should not be allowed to go anywhere at camp that campers are not allowed. As the dog will always need to be with the camper, it should be an expectation that the dog is restricted to where the camper can go, even when it is relieving itself.
- The service dog should not be allowed to go into other cabins or sleeping areas that are not assigned to the camper. You will have collected information on allergies and dog aversions and assigned camper cabins accordingly; respect this as much as possible.
- Dogs should not be allowed in the kitchen. Fairly self-explanatory, but most health departments would not be too keen on an animal in the kitchen.
- If possible, seating the camper or family near the exit door in the dining hall is a good idea. The dog is out of the way when trays of food are being brought out and proximity to the exit provides easy access to outside if the dog needs to use the lawn.

III. Follow-Up

The session was a success! The camper and the service dog seemed to have a great time, and the rest of the camp community was happy with the execution as well. You should still follow-up with your staff and the camper's family afterward to get input for improvement for next time you host a service dog. This should be done soon after the session ends so information is fresh in everyone's minds and recorded for future use.

This process will not be perfect the first time you attempt it, and that is OK. You will learn from the challenges to be even better for the next camper, just like anything new tackled at camp. The important thing is that you can include a camper who needs camp, which is the greatest thing we can do in our work.

The information presented is a cumulation of best practices from SeriousFun Children's Network camps. Every camp will need to evaluate for themselves what works, and not everything suggested will work for every camp. The author is open to further discussions on the topic to share her knowledge and learn from others.

Samantha Clark has held many roles in the camp community since 2006. She currently works on the program team at SeriousFun Children's Network, supporting the 30 camps and programs around the world in their pursuit to provide life-changing experiences for kids and families living with serious illnesses. Please reach her at samantha.clark@seriousfunnetwork.org.

Photo courtesy of Camp Eagle Ridge, Mellen, WI

Coronavirus Information

With the potential spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) within the United States, ACA is working to provide the most up-to-date information available to help camps in their efforts to review and update health-related plans and procedures and communicate with their camp families and staff. The resources on ACA's Coronavirus — Information for Camps page will be updated regularly as new information becomes available.

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***The CampLine* team:**

Kaley Belakovich, Kim Brosnan, Laurie Browne, Marcia Ellett, Laura Foreman, Kelley Freridge, Amy Katzenberger, Danielle Pinney, Kyle Winkel