

Include Pets in Your Emergency Plan

Soni Cochran

*Extension Associate,
Lancaster County*

A disaster can happen quickly. Assembling an emergency kit and making a communications plan are two important ways you can prepare to help keep you and your family safe. For many families, pets are also members of the household and their care should be included in an emergency plan.

Pet Emergency Kit

Preparing a pet emergency kit — the basics:

- **Food***: Keep at least 3–7 days of food for each pet in an airtight container.
- **Water***: In addition to water for your family, store at least 3 days of water for each pet.
- **Medications***: If your pet takes medications regularly, store extra medications in a waterproof bag and add to the kit.
- **First Aid**: Talk to your veterinarian and ask what to include in a first-aid kit for your pet's emergency needs. A pet first-aid reference book should also be included in the kit.



Vicki Jedlicka, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County

Practice your evacuation plan with your pet(s) before you are faced with a crisis.

- **Crate or pet carrier**: If you have to evacuate, a sturdy pet carrier can help transport and house your pet safely. Write your pet's name, your name and contact information on the crate or carrier.
- **Collar, harness, leash and identification**: Make sure your pet has identification and, if applicable, a rabies tag on at all times. Put an extra collar, leash and tags in the pet emergency kit. Talk to your veterinarian about permanent identification like microchipping and registering your pet on a national pet database. Put copies of your pet's registration and adoption paperwork,

vaccination and medical records in a waterproof plastic bag. Also include a recent photo of you with your pet in the event you get separated.

- **Sanitation**: Depending on the type of pet, your kit may need litter, litter box, pet pads or crate liners, newspapers, paper towels, trash bags and disinfectant.
- **Comfort**: Help reduce your pet's stress by adding a favorite toy, bedding and/or treats to the kit. Be sure to bring bowls for food and water.

*Stored food, water and medications should be checked routinely to prevent spoilage or replace if expired.

Evacuating With a Pet

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports animals left behind in a disaster can easily be lost or injured. If you must evacuate, take your pets with you.

Keep in mind, public shelters may or may not allow your pets inside the building. Your pet emergency plan should identify hotels or motels that allow pets, veterinarians, kennels or boarding facilities that are near possible evacuation shelters.

Another option is to talk to family and friends to see if they are able to take you and your pets in if there is a disaster.

Your pet emergency plan should also include a back-up plan in case you can't get home during a disaster to evacuate your pets or care for them.

Visit www.ready.gov/animals for more information and resources.

Sources: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), ASPCA, Humane Society of America and The American Kennel Club.

EXTENSION RESOURCES

flood.unl.edu
email floodresponse@unl.edu



Families & Individuals



Homeowners



Businesses & Communities



Agriculture

Going Batty: Bugs on Bats

Jody Green, PhD

*Extension Educator,
Lancaster County*

Bats in Nebraska

Bats are a likely, yet uninvited houseguest in many homes in Nebraska. Of the 13 species of bats that occur in Nebraska, very few are found in or near structures. Bats are nocturnal animals that feed solely on flying insects such as mosquitoes, beetles and moths.

When they get into homes they become a nuisance by their movement and noises, which can be heard in wall or attic voids, and their droppings, called guano, can build up and make a mess. They can also be a public health pest because they are associated with transmitting rabies and histoplasmosis to humans.

One thing not often mentioned are the ectoparasites of bats, such as the bat bug. Bat bugs are similar to bed bugs in their appearance and blood-feeding behavior, but there are significant differences in terms of prevention and management.

Bat Bugs and Bed Bugs

Bat bugs and bed bugs are in the family Cimicidae. Both bat bugs and bed bugs are characterized as being small, brown, oval-shaped, bugs with flattened bodies. They are wingless with segmented antennae, and a piercing-sucking mouthpart tucked under their bodies.

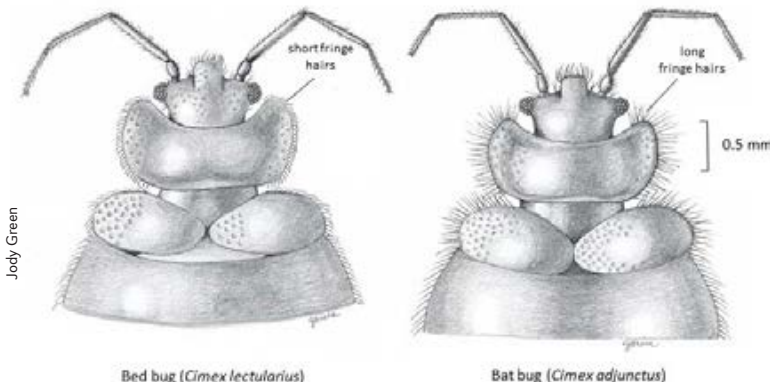


Illustration of the difference between the bed bug and the bat bug.



Adult bat bugs (magnified)

Often they are compared to the size and shape of an apple seed. Both bugs require a blood meal in order to grow, develop and produce offspring.

As the name implies, the primary host of bat bugs are bats, whereas the primary host of bed bugs are humans. In the absence of a primary host, however, bat bugs will feed on humans given the opportunity. Bed bugs come into our homes by hitchhiking on our belongings and bat bugs enter the structure from hitchhiking on bats.

Physical Differences

At first glance, the bed bug and the bat bug look identical, but with the use of a magnifying lens, there are slight physical

differences between the two. Both bugs are covered with hair, but the bat bug has much longer hair, particularly behind the head on the part of the body called the pronotum.

Behavioral Differences

Bed bugs typically feed on their host while the host is sleeping and can go for months without being noticed, hiding in cracks and crevices around bed frames, headboards, box springs and mattress seams.

Bat bugs are strangely found out in the open, walking about on furniture, along window sills, fireplaces or on top of the bed covers. Bat bugs are found on the top floor of homes and apartments because bats tend to roost higher up in attic spaces, chimneys or decorative shutters. Bat bugs enter living areas through cracks and gaps around vents, windows, light fixtures, attic doors and ceiling fans.

If You Find a Bug

Do not panic! Capture the

If You Have a Bat Inside Your House

If you are in Lincoln and find a bat in the living space of your home, do not shoo it out. If a bat is inside your house and you know where it is located, call Lincoln Animal Control to safely remove the bat and take it to the Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Center at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln for rabies testing. If you are outside the city and can safely trap and contain the bat, take it to a veterinarian. If you have been exposed to a bat and may have been bitten, contact your primary care physician.

bug without squishing it and place in a plastic bag or clear jar with a lid. Stick the container in the freezer to keep the bug intact so all hairs can be observed. Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County offers free pest identification. Samples can be dropped off at 444 Cherrycreek Road in Lincoln, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Submitting a photo without magnification is often too blurry for a positive identification.

Control Methods

Bat bugs prefer to stay close to bats and only wander away when dislodged or when hosts leave the roosting areas. The number one reason for finding a bat bug in the home is because there are bats roosting in the structure. The solution is to remove the bats from the areas to eliminate the host/food of the bat bug. There is usually no need to treat bedrooms, beds or other sleeping areas with insecticides if the bats are eliminated.

Saying to remember: **June through July — Let them fly!**

The best time to exclude bats is after Aug. 1 because bats have their young in spring and by

the end of July, they are mature enough to leave the roost. Exclusion is the best method for control and includes installing a one-way door so the bats can fly out, but no longer return.

Hire a Professional If You Have Bats Roosting in the House

Over the last three years, the number of bat bug inquiries and identifications have increased, which indicates a greater abundance of urban bats in the city of Lincoln and surrounding areas.

Professional pest management companies should have a hand lens with them or microscope at their office. It is important to positively identify the pest so the correct course of action can be taken.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension NebGuide, *Bats in and Around Structures (G1667)*, is available at the Extension office and online at <https://wildlife.unl.edu/pdfs/bats-in-around-structures.pdf>