

GUIDELINES FOR DISEASE REPORTING FOR SOUTHERN BENT-WING BATS

What is disease surveillance and why is it important?

Southern bent-wing bats are critically endangered, with population numbers having declined sharply over the last few decades. We are concerned about disease as a potential contributor to future population declines, including, **but not limited to**, the devastating fungal disease [White Nose Syndrome](#) (see also [Wildlife Health Australia Fact Sheet](#)), which is currently thought to be exotic to Australia.

Engaging in disease surveillance means being on the constant lookout for disease outbreaks, through examining live and/or dead bats, testing for diseases and determining cause of death where possible. Early detection gives us the best chance at managing such outbreaks before they have significant or irreversible impacts on populations.

What should I be looking for?

Bats can carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans, including Australian Bat Lyssavirus. **It is therefore important that you DO NOT HANDLE ANY DEAD OR ALIVE BATS.**

Please look out for southern bent-wing bats (or any other bats) with the following features:

- groups of dead bats (three or more dead bats found close to each other)
- ongoing bat deaths (three or more bats found dead within days of each other)
- live bats that show abnormal behaviour, e.g. found on the ground, flying during the day
- live and dead bats with external signs of disease, e.g. abnormal skin (powdery material, scabs, lumps, ulcers) or wing damage (discolouration, flakiness, holes)

What should I do if I find something?

If you find any bat that is sick or injured and still alive, please contact the local wildlife care organisation or a local veterinarian. Remember that you **MUST NOT HANDLE THE BAT.**

To report dead or alive bats with the features outlined above, contact one of the below:

- Your local [State/Territory Wildlife Health Australia \(WHA\) Coordinator](#)
- The 24 h [Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline](#) on Freecall 1800 675 888
- Your local veterinarian

Please record and report:

- Exact location of the bat(s)
- Other details if known (number of bats affected, species, unusual behaviour)
- Take photographs

Examples of suspicious signs of disease:



Bat with furry growths (White Nose Syndrome in this example) on wings and head in North America (Image: Patuxent Wildlife Research Centre)



Bat with scabby lesions on wings (caused by infection with mite in this example) (Image: Holz et al. 2019)