

RABIES

It won't happen to me!

My name is Jessica and I have been working in the veterinary field for ten years and had never seen an animal with rabies, so that is exactly what I thought, until it DID happen to me! My small family and I relocated to this area about four years ago and we have been remodeling an old farm house. We had a bat get into our living quarters here and there and often heard them in the attic or between the walls, but didn't think much of it; after all, we live in the country who doesn't have bats?

In February 2009, evening well under way, my two cats were causing a big commotion in the dining room. When I went to see what was going on, I realized they had a bat on the floor that obviously was unable to fly. After catching the bat in a tupperware container, I decided I would take it to work with me and submit it for rabies testing. I would have never thought that one decision would not only turn my life upside down but truly open my eyes about rabies!

When the phone at the clinic rang the next day and Dr Heather looked at me and said "Jess, your bat was positive for rabies", my first thought was that this had to be a joke. After all I didn't know anyone who had ever submitted a positive animal, and I was also seven months pregnant. This could not be happening! But it was...over the next 2 hours I fielded calls from the PA Department of Health and Department of Agriculture. They wanted myself, my husband and my two year old daughter to immediately go to the ER to begin the rabies post-exposure series. When I asked if these vaccines had ever been tested on pregnant woman, and they told me no, but it didn't matter-IF I had somehow contracted the virus through the bats saliva it is almost always fatal without the treatment. So regardless of the impact the vaccine had on my unborn child, I had to get it. The treatment consisted of nine injections for myself and 7 for my young daughter.

The Department of Agriculture came out to my house to review all of my animals vaccine histories, and because I was a few days overdue for rabies vaccines for my cats, they quarantined my animals and my house for six months. They did monthly home visits to check on the health of my pets and to ensure I still had the bright yellow quarantine sign in my window.

We survived the ordeal, but according to the PA Dept of Ag, rabies numbers are on the rise.

In 2009 there were 388 documented cases of rabies and in 2010 the numbers rose to 419 documented cases. Below is a link for information about the signs and symptoms of rabies. Educate yourself and know that IT CAN happen!

[Click here for more rabies information.](#)