



# News Release

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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### **'BATMAN' LEARNS ABOUT RABIES AFTER RESCUE ATTEMPT**

**CHARLESTON AFB, SC --** A local flyer began a series of rabies shots here July 27 after being bitten by a bat found floating in his backyard swimming pool.

Fortunately, Capt. Vance Noonan, a pilot with the 15<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron, began receiving the shots as a preventative measure, because the bat tested positive for rabies the next day.

"We've seen bats flying around trying to get the mosquitoes off the surface of the pool before, so this was not unusual," said Noonan.

Noonan was swimming in his pool when he said the bat splashed down in front of him.

"The poor thing looked like it was drowning and I'm too much of an animal lover to have just let it drown," said Noonan. "It looked so helpless. That's why I didn't think it posed too much of a danger to me."

As Noonan attempted to scoop the bat out of the pool with his cupped hands, he said the bat bit him on his ring finger.

"My finger bled a little bit, but it was more like a scratch," said Noonan. "I was more upset at the ungrateful creature who had just bitten me after I was trying to save its life."

Immediately following the incident, Noonan called the flight surgeon on duty and was told bats can carry rabies.

"I knew that if you didn't have the animal with you, then you'd have to have all the rabies shots," said Noonan. "Luckily, I was able to trap the bat with a water pitcher, and animal control came to get it."

However, Noonan wasn't able to skip out on the sequence of shots to his arm.

"The phone rang on Saturday (July 27), and I immediately thought 'please let them be calling me with the all-clear message,'" said Noonan, "but the bat had tested positive, so I finished up on the rabies shots.

"The shots weren't that bad at all," continued Noonan. "They don't hurt more than being pricked in the thumb with a tack. They were one of the least painful shots I've ever received, even though my arm is a little sore."

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Since the incident, Noonan said he has been made aware of several statistics on bats.

“It was pretty surprising to know that the bat was rabid,” said Noonan. “I heard only one percent of the bat population is rabid, and they count for the majority of rabies cases.”

Also in the pool with Noonan and the rabid bat were his 2- and 4-year-old daughters.

“I preach to the kids about wild animals,” said Noonan, “and if you see one, stay away. My hindsight is 20/20, and that day I just wanted to help the bat before it drowned.”

Even though Noonan regrets having handled the bat with his hands, he also said that it was a good thing he caught it.

“If I had to do it over again, I would have gotten the net,” said Noonan. “My wife said later that if you’re physically able to touch a bat, then it’s probably the one bat you don’t want to handle.”

Although Noonan came away from the ordeal unharmed, he wasn’t disappointed with how the incident came about.

“It’s a little embarrassing,” said Noonan. “I would have rather made the news for saving a life or something like that, but I try to keep a good sense of humor.

“I do feel a little funny though lately,” joked Noonan. “Suddenly I have a strong dislike of garlic, I’m sensitive to the light, and I have a tendency to want to sleep upside down.”

Even though Noonan was able to turn a potentially tragic incident into an array of jokes, he said he still learned the most important lesson of all: “No good deed goes unpunished.”

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