

Indoor Cats: Why bother with vaccinations?

Raise your hand if you have an indoor cat. This article is for you. Now, put your hand down...it will keep your neighbors wondering what you are up to!

I am going to share some of the calls my office receives regarding wildlife making its way into homes. That should be all the incentive cat owners will need to get their indoor pets vaccinated against rabies.

Recently, I got a call from a person whose indoor cat caught a bat at their "up north" cabin. After handling the call, I started recalling all the crazy ways I have heard about pets (usually cats) being exposed to wild animals in their home. These could happen to any of us, and are great reasons to keep indoor cats up to date on rabies vaccinations.

Picture the kids running out to the backyard bonfire and leaving the screen door open. The moths come into the lights and the bats follow the moths inside.

Have you ever set down grocery bags on the steps while you fumble with the door? I have heard of bats piggybacking in on the bag right to the kitchen.

Remodeling job can create openings between attic and living spaces. If bats are in the attic, some could pass through an opening to your closet or bedroom. Most bats can fit through a hole the size of a dime.

The family dog captures something alive outside and brings it inside to show it off.

Kids like to capture critters outside. When they bring them in to find a container, some of these rescued critters escape and hide.

Have you ever hung laundry or camping gear out to dry? I have had callers describe bats hiding in the leg or pocket of some jeans. They got a free ride indoors with the laundry. Be sure to give the laundry a good shake if it was outside overnight.

In Wisconsin, we make seasonal clothing changes, from summer to winter. This is known as the snow to mosquito transition. Off-season clothes stored in bins might allow critters indoors with the clothes.

If the foam around the window air conditioner has gaps, bats can squeeze inside.

Firewood brought in during winter can have unseen dormant bats hiding against the bark. When the bats thaw out, they start squeaking and flapping.

I have heard of raccoons and opossums coming in through pet doors. Sometimes they tear thru patio screen doors and come right in. The females commonly climb down the chimney. Behind the flue is a dry, predator-free place to have their babies. They make a lot of mess and a lot of noise! Raccoons are also very fond of campers and boats stored for winter. They are quite messy and destructive and may bite whoever disturbs them, whether human or pet.

Have my stories convinced you that indoor pets need “outdoor” shots? Rabies virus is currently present in Waukesha County and it is fatal for pets and humans if not treated. Vaccinate your pets! A rabies vaccine is a very inexpensive safety precaution.

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