



# AUSTRALASIAN BAT SOCIETY, INC.

ABN 75 120 155 626

<http://ausbats.org.au>

ABS President: Dr Kyle Armstrong

Email: [president@ausbats.org.au](mailto:president@ausbats.org.au)

## MEDIA STATEMENT

### Australian bat lyssavirus 26 February 2013

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The Australasian Bat Society is saddened to hear of the young boy in Queensland who has succumbed to an Australian bat lyssavirus infection, and our thoughts are with his family.

Although heartbreaking tragedies like this sometimes occur, the risk of infection from Australian bat lyssavirus to members of the general public is low, and such risk can be reduced further by following the recommendations of health authorities.

Health authorities warn against the public handling bats; however, if unintentional contact occurs, they recommend immediate treatment of bites and scratches by scrubbing with soapy water for 10 mins, and then seeking prompt medical treatment and advice on post exposure vaccinations.

Professional animal handlers should always be called in to deal with sick, injured or entangled animals, as they are knowledgeable of the relevant risks and are able to use appropriate safety precautions.

Australian bat lyssavirus can only be passed to a person after contact with saliva through a scratch or bite. The virus is not transferred to humans through contact with faeces or urine, through rainwater from roofs contaminated with bat faeces or urine, eating fruit that bats have touched, or simply by being near or standing beneath a bat colony.

The Australasian Bat Society believes that culling of flying-foxes is neither sensible nor likely to be effective.

We do not need to cull bats to effectively reduce the risks from bat-borne diseases such as Australian Bat lyssavirus.

We are concerned that attempts to kill and/or disperse flying-foxes will lead to further unnecessary risk of exposure to Australian Bat lyssavirus to those involved, as well as the general public.

A fact sheet on Australian bat lyssavirus and Hendra virus can be downloaded from <http://ausbats.org.au/#/bats-and-diseases/4569171085>

#### **About the Australasian Bat Society, Inc.**

We are a not-for-profit organisation, registered under the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 1984 through the NSW Department of Fair Trading. Our aim is to promote the

conservation and study of bats in Australasia. ABS membership is wide-ranging and includes research scientists, natural resource managers, students, wildlife carers and members of the general public. For further information please visit <http://ausbats.org.au/>.