

# 2022 NCWRC Protocols for Bat Handling Surveys During COVID-19 Pandemic



If data collection using contact methods is necessary, permittees must adhere to the following protocols:

1. Reduce contact surveys to the greatest extent possible by limiting the number of netting nights (or other capture surveys) to the minimum amount needed to accomplish project goals.
2. Use the smallest team of surveyors possible for conducting the survey. Limit spectators and volunteers.
3. Keep a consistent team of surveyors and avoid changing personnel more than necessary.
4. Follow routine screening before each survey. Anyone who has experienced the following must avoid activity with bats:
  - a. Diagnosis with COVID-19 in the last 5 days
  - b. Symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, fatigue, loss of smell and taste) in the last 5 days
  - c. Contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or showing symptoms in the last 5 days
5. In addition to following the National White-nose Syndrome Decontamination Protocol, surveyors must wear additional PPE and follow additional protocols for reducing risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission to bats.
6. To reduce Aerosol Exposure:
  - a. Wear a NIOSH-approved mask throughout the entire survey, except during breaks for eating and drinking. This mask should be disposed of after the survey because of potential WNS contamination.
  - b. Do not blow on bats. Use a nasal aspirator to blow a puff of air to part fur or to stop biting.
7. To reduce Contact Exposure:
  - a. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at the start of work before touching any equipment that will contact bats (i.e., before setup).
  - b. Wear latex or nitrile gloves when handling bats and equipment that will contact bats and change gloves between each bat.
  - c. Adjusting your mask, touching your face, sneezing or coughing can contaminate your gloves, so only wear gloves when checking nets and handling bats or equipment. Use hand sanitizer before putting on gloves. Do not contaminate your leather bat handling gloves since these can't be easily disinfected on site.
  - d. Try to avoid touching your face or mask. Use hand sanitizer or change your gloves if you do touch your face or mask. You can use hand sanitizer on your latex/nitrile gloves, but it must dry before touching bats. Also use hand sanitizer after bathroom breaks and after eating or drinking.
8. Limit the number of people who handle each bat to the extent possible. Other surveyors should keep a distance of 6 ft. or greater as often as possible.

9. Define a separate space for surveyors to eat and drink away from bats and equipment that will contact bats.  
Do not eat or drink while wearing gloves.
10. Keep track of all contact activities and personnel involved. Alert the NCWRC if a surveyor could have exposed bats to SARS-CoV-2.

## Resources:

NIOSH-approved masks: [https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp\\_part/n95list1.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/n95list1.html)

CDC Guidance for Reducing the Risk of SARS-CoV-2 Spreading between People and Wildlife:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/wildlife.html>

IUCN SSC Bat Specialist Group (BSG) Recommended Strategy for Researchers to Reduce the Risk of Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from Humans to Bats:  
[https://www.iucnbsg.org/uploads/6/5/0/9/6509077/amp\\_recommendations\\_for\\_researchers\\_final.pdf](https://www.iucnbsg.org/uploads/6/5/0/9/6509077/amp_recommendations_for_researchers_final.pdf)

EPA List of Disinfectants for COVID-19:  
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>

National White-nose Syndrome Decontamination Protocol: <https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/prod-is-cms-assets/wns/prod/56f60a70-0e5b-11eb-8166-337c3d472ee8-Final-October2020%20revised%20WNS%20Decon%20Protocol-with%20cover%20letter.pdf>