



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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## **COUNTY REPORTS EXPOSURE OF INDIVIDUALS TO RABID BATS** ***Public Urged: Do Not Handle Bats; Call Local Animal Control Agency to Pick Up Bats***

The County of San Diego HHSA (Health and Human Services Agency) reports three recent exposures of humans to bats that tested positive for rabies since Aug. 10.

A man on Wednesday, Aug. 22, handled a dead bat found near his office building in the Scripps Ranch/Poway area. This bat was submitted for testing and tested positive for rabies. The man has since begun the rabies vaccination series.

The bat is the third bat testing positive for rabies to be reported since Aug. 10. The other bats were found in Escondido. A man and a woman who had contact with one of the bats are also receiving rabies vaccinations.

"This is an unusual number of rabid bats in a two-week period," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "We are alerting the medical community and urging the public to never handle bats, dead or alive. Even if they don't bite you, you can be infected through tiny cuts on your skin. Call your local animal control agency to pick up the bat."

Locally, this year, 16 bats have been tested for rabies to date; of the 16, four bats (25 percent) have tested positive for rabies. In 2006, 22 bats were tested and two (9 percent) were positive for rabies. Public Health Services tests bats that are typically found dead or dying by persons known or suspected to have had possible exposure to them.

Rabies is a disease that affects only mammals, chiefly wild animals. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 93 of 100 reported cases in animals are identified in wild animals, including bats, skunks, foxes, and raccoons.

Pet owners are urged to ensure that their pets are vaccinated against rabies. If your pet is bitten by a wild animal and has had its rabies vaccinations, it is recommended the pet be re-vaccinated for rabies within 48 hours from the time of the contact with the wild animal. Anyone who finds a dead or incapacitated bat, or a wild or stray animal that is acting strangely, should call their local animal control agency. If you have been bitten by a wild animal, contact your physician.

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