



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION  
Sept. 17, 2007

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## **PUBLIC CAUTIONED NOT TO HANDLE BATS TO PREVENT RABIES EXPOSURE** *Other Wild Animals, Including Skunks, Foxes and Raccoons, Also Can Carry the Disease*

The County of San Diego HHSA (Health and Human Services Agency) reminds the public to stay away from bats to prevent possible exposure to rabies.

“Bat sightings and exposure often occurs this time of year. Bats are carriers of rabies, a disease that can be deadly. Don’t put yourself in the position of having to undergo the process of rabies vaccination due to exposure to bats,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County of San Diego Public Health Officer. “Curiosity about bats tends to rise around this time of year, with Halloween approaching. If you see a bat, dead or alive, don’t touch it.”

Locally, this year, 19 bats have been tested for rabies to date; of the 19, four bats (21 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 vaccination involves a series of six shots over a 28-day period after exposure. 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 rabies 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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