



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Oct. 19, 2006

CONTACT: Leslie Ridgeway (619) 685-2239

## **COUNTY REPORTS EXPOSURE OF STUDENTS TO A RABID BAT** *Public Health Services is Working with School; Public Urged Not to Handle Bats*

San Diego County, Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Public Health Services (PHS) is working with an Oceanside elementary school after a student brought a dead bat to the classroom. The bat has tested positive for rabies.

The child reportedly brought the bat to school in a plastic bag on Wednesday, Oct. 18. The school notified PHS of the bat and is notifying parents of the exposure.

No other children are currently known to have handled the bat at the school. "The parents of the child who handled the bat are being advised to contact their physician for evaluation," said Dr. Wilma Wooten, Deputy Public Health Officer. "With Halloween approaching, it is important that parents tell children to stay away from bats. They may look like Halloween decorations, but this incident illustrates why no one should handle bats, even when they are dead."

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.

###