



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES WARNS AGAINST CONTACT WITH BATS**

*Wild Animals In General Should Be Avoided to Guard Against Rabies*

Bats are associated with Halloween because they're scary, and for good reason. People can get rabies by handling them with bare hands, and the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency urges the public to avoid bats year round.

Eleven percent of bats tested for disease test positive for rabies, which can be fatal to humans and animals if not treated. Rabies in humans is very rare, and while treatment is available, the regimen includes a series of five vaccinations, given over a 28-day period.

"A real bat is not a Halloween treat," says Greg Cox, chair, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "Anyone who comes across a bat should leave it alone, and contact County Animal Services. Even if it appears to be dead, it may be infected."

The number for County Animal Services is (619) 236-4250.

Infected animals may be aggressive and agitated, or paralyzed and passive, appearing to be dead. Anyone who is bitten or scratched by a wild animal should wash the bite thoroughly with soap and water and contact their primary physician. Bites are not the only method of exposure; rabies virus from bat saliva can sometimes be transmitted to eyes, nose and mouth. Do not dispose of dead bats; collect them safely and call County Animal Services for testing.

Bats should be kept out of homes or other areas where they might contact people or pets. Bats can enter homes via unscreened windows. Cats and dogs also should be kept away from bats and other wild animals.

Do not handle or approach any unfamiliar domestic or wild animals, especially bats, coyotes, foxes, opossums, raccoons or skunks. Domesticated pets' vaccinations for rabies should be kept up to date.

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