



For Immediate Release:

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HEALTH ADVISORY: Public Cautioned to Avoid Contact with Bats

LOS ANGELES – The Department of Public Health is cautioning the public against handling bats or other wildlife. Recent news reports indicate that more found bats in some areas of Southern California have tested positive for rabies. In Los Angeles County, Public Health has identified 12 rabid bats throughout the county since the beginning of the year. On average, eight to 10 rabid bats are detected every year.

“These numbers do not mean that the public should become alarmed. Most bats do not have rabies,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “However we want everyone to be aware of what they should do if they see a bat on the ground, or if they or their pets come into contact with a bat.”

How to reduce risk for rabies:

Few bats found in nature are positive for rabies. However a bat found on the ground or in a home may be sick and all contact with the animal should be avoided. Bats are a federally protected species and it is illegal for the general public to kill or harass a bat.

- If a person or a pet has direct contact with a bat, the bat should be tested for rabies. Place a box or container over the bat and immediately call your local animal control agency for instructions.
- Do not handle or attempt to “rescue” a sick bat or other wildlife. Contact your local animal control agency for instructions.
- Children should be taught to avoid all contact with bats and other wildlife.
- Bats seen in the wild, such as while hiking, should be avoided.
- If you are bitten by wildlife, immediately consult your doctor or health care provider.
- Make sure your dog or cats’ vaccinations are up-to-date, whether they are indoor or outdoor pets.
- Unvaccinated pets that come into contact with a bat may need to be euthanized or quarantined for up to six-months at the owner’s expense, and may be at risk for rabies infection.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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