



City and County of San Francisco

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Five Rabid Bats Identified in the Lake Merced area in Past Four Months

San Francisco, CA -- Five rabid bats have been identified in the Lake Merced area of San Francisco since April, 2012. Because rabies is a serious condition that, if left untreated, can be fatal, residents of the Lake Merced area of San Francisco have been sent written notices to contact the San Francisco Department of Public Health if they or their pets have come in contact with live or dead bats.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) routinely conducts rabies testing on bats that have been found in people's homes, or have been found outdoors and appear to be sick or have died. Since 2009, 133 bats have been tested for rabies in San Francisco and 12% have tested positive.

According to Tomás Aragón, MD, Health Officer for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, "Rabid bats are a serious concern, and all San Francisco residents should be aware that if they find a bat that appears dead, sick or unable to fly, do not touch or handle the bat. Notify Animal Care and Control (ACC) at (415) 554-9400 to capture or retrieve the bat for testing. If you think you may have come into contact with a bat, call the San Francisco Department of Public Health at (415) 554-2830."

About Bats and Rabies in San Francisco

Bats live in many areas of San Francisco and are part of a healthy ecosystem. They do not pose a threat unless they come in contact with people or their pets because they may carry rabies, a disease that is almost always fatal to humans. Although dogs remain the most common source of rabies worldwide, bats are the most likely carriers of the disease in California and especially in San Francisco. Most people worry about getting rabies from a dog or cat, but data shows that more than 90% of human cases in the United States are acquired from bats.

Pet owners also need to be aware that rabies poses a real threat to their unvaccinated animals. Rabies vaccine is safe and effective. There has not been a case of cat or dog rabies in San Francisco in over 60 years.

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Public Health is to protect and promote the health of all San Franciscans.

We shall ~ Assess and research the health of the community ~ Develop and enforce health policy ~ Prevent disease and injury ~
~ Educate the public and train health care providers ~ Provide quality, comprehensive, culturally-proficient health services ~ Ensure equal access to all ~

101 Grove Street, Room 308, San Francisco, CA 94102 • Phone: 415-554-2600

There have been no cases of human rabies in San Francisco since 1987, and health officials believe that the 1987 case occurred in a person whose exposure to a rabid animal occurred outside the United States, not in San Francisco.

HOW YOU CAN PREVENT RABIES

- Never touch unfamiliar, wild or stray animals; do not touch bats even if they appear to be dead. Instead, call ACC at (415) 554-9400 to pick up the bat for testing.
- If you had any contact with a live or dead bat, call the SFPDH Communicable Disease Unit at (415) 554-2830 for advice on whether rabies shots are needed
- Enjoy all wild animals from a distance and teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals – even if they appear friendly.
- Wild animals should not be kept as pets.
- If you see a wild animal acting strangely, report it to city or county animal control officials.
- If you find a bat in your home:
 - Evacuate any room with a live bat immediately, and close the door and windows
 - Do not touch or handle the bat
 - Contact ACC at (415) 554-9400 to pick up the bat for testing.
- Call the SFPDH Communicable Disease Unit at (415) 554-2830 for advice on whether rabies shots are needed
- Bat-proof your home:
 - Put screens on all windows and use chimney caps.
 - Do not leave doors or unscreened windows open.
 - Place draft-guards beneath doors to attics and ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.
- All dogs, cats and ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies.
- Pet owners can reduce the possibility of pets being exposed to rabies by not letting them roam free.
- Don't feed or water your pets outside. Empty bowls can attract wild and stray animals.
- Keep your garbage securely covered. Open garbage will attract wild or stray animals.
- If your pet has come into contact with a bat, contact Animal Care & Control (415) 554-9400.

For additional information go to SFPDH Website at <http://www.sfcddcp.org/rabies.html> or CDC Website at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/>