



**Riverside County
Public Health**



Rabid Bat Cases Prompts Reminders, Tips Three Separate Incidents in County This Month

FRIDAY, AUG. 28, 2015 – Three separate rabid bat incidents have been recorded in Riverside County this month, including two this week.

Officials with the Riverside County Department of Public Health and Riverside County Animal Services said they wanted to use the recent activities as an opportunity to reeducate people about what to do when they come across a bat. Anytime someone has been bitten by a wild animal, the victim should seek medical attention.

On Tuesday (Aug. 25), up to eight people, including children, were possibly exposed to a rabid bat in a Lake Elsinore neighborhood. Reportedly, someone found a bat, placed it inside a box and showed it to several people, including children. It is believed the bat was being rubbed as if a pet. The incident is still being investigated by county health officials to determine the exact number of people possibly exposed.

A day after the Lake Elsinore bat activity, a woman in Moreno Valley came in contact with a bat when it flew into her garage and then into her hair. Her son was able to use a towel and captured the bat inside a bag.

“While it is very rare in humans, rabies is a potentially fatal illness so it is important the community understand how serious this can be,” said Barbara Cole, head of disease control for the county. “People can avoid problems by taking some basic precautions.”

One of the most important lessons for parents to teach children is the message promoted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly. “Love your own, leave other animals alone,” is a good principle for children to learn.

Rabies in humans is rare – but the most common cases are a result of people coming in contact with a rabid bat, according to the CDC.

In the past five years, Riverside County has coordinated approximately 300 tests involving bats. Most of these tests (214) involve a random bat that someone has found and turned into an animal control agency (in other words: no exposure suspected). Since 2010, the county has tested only 16 bats that a person has had contact with and, of those incidents, four tested positive for rabies. Pets with bat contact account for 41 incidents during the past five years. Of those, seven bats tested positive for rabies.

MORE MORE MORE

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It's unusual to discover a bat during day-time hours and usually these are bats that are usually infected with rabies. They may appear dead but, when touched, surprise people with a nasty bite.

Of the three bat incidents this month, the one on Aug. 7 was one of the more bizarre ones and it resulted in the victim being exposed by an actual bite.

A Southwest Riverside County resident suffered a bat bite to one of her fingers in what could be described as an unusual and unlucky incident. On Aug. 7, the victim* was on a day trip to the Coachella Valley in an off-road recreation area. As she and her friend packed up at dusk, a bat flew into her truck's open window – although she said she didn't know it was a bat. "We thought it was a large grasshopper or something," she* said.

Later, she stopped for gas and didn't realize the object in a cup holder was a live bat. Thinking the object was a piece of trash, she reached for it and suffered a puncture to one of her fingers. After a few harrowing minutes, she and her friend eventually trapped the bat inside a box. A Riverside County Animal Services officer transported the bat to a lab where it tested positive for rabies.

The woman sought medical treatment at a hospital near her home, south of Corona.

People who find bats that appear sick or injured should never touch the bat with bare hands.

Anyone who believes they have been exposed to a bat, should consult their health care provider. Exposure can happen even when a bite or scratch has not occurred (such as contact with the bat's saliva or feces). Anyone who finds a bat on their property or inside their home, please contact their local animal control for assistance. Residents within Riverside County Animal Services jurisdiction can call 951-358-7387.

People can also seek further information by calling the county's disease control number at 951-358-5107.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a link with helpful information, including tips for parents to give to their children (look for the dog cartoon on the left of the screen):

<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/bats/education/index.html>

(*PLEASE NOTE: The woman's name is not being used in this news release because of privacy laws; However, she said she would be willing to do media interviews on camera or speak with reporters by phone; Riverside County Animal Services PIO John Welsh will help coordinate those interviews John's cell phone number is 951-565-7934 or he can be reached by e-mail at jcwelsh@rcdas.org.)

RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES

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