



**For Immediate Release:**

October 14, 2011

## **HEALTH ADVISORY:**

### **Health Officials Seek Individuals Who May Have Handled Rabid Bat**

LOS ANGELES – County health officials are seeking help in locating any individuals that handled a rabid bat at the Silverwood State Recreation Area in the city of Hesperia on Labor Day, September 5, 2011. The bat was discovered in the Black Oak area bathrooms (Building 10). Exposed individuals may need to receive urgent rabies preventive treatment if they handled the bat with their bare hands.

Individuals that may have been in contact with the rabid bat should immediately contact the Los Angeles Public Health Acute Communicable Disease Control unit at (213) 240-7941 on work days from 8:00-5:00 PM or call (213) 974-1234 after working hours or on weekends for guidance on rabies prophylaxis.

“People think of rabies as a disease from the past, but cases still occur and rabies can be fatal if it is not treated before symptoms start,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Residents should not touch or handle bats, and seek medical attention immediately if they are bitten or scratched. Pets should also be vaccinated against rabies.”

The symptoms associated with rabies can start from 3 weeks to 2 or more years after contact with a rabid animal. Early symptoms can include fever, headache, and general weakness. As the disease progresses, more symptoms appear to include insomnia, agitation, anxiety, confusion, and partial paralysis, hallucination, increases in saliva, and difficulty with swallowing.

For persons who have had exposure to the rabies virus, rabies vaccination and immunoglobulin treatment is highly effective but should be administered as soon as possible after the rabid exposure. Rabies vaccination and immunoglobulin is available through the public health department and medical providers.

Although this exposure occurred in San Bernardino County, the residents of Los Angeles County should also heed the warning not to have direct contact with bats because 34 rabid bats have already been detected in LA County so far this year, higher than the annual average of 8-12. Direct exposure to a rabid animal, such as a bat, can lead to transmission of rabies to humans. Rabies is most commonly spread through the bite from an infected animal, but other forms of contact usually also require preventive treatment.

Dead or trapped bats can be tested for rabies by contacting Veterinary Public Health at (877) 747-2243.



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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