

ANIMAL HEALTH ALERT

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Animal Health Advisory: First Rabid Raccoon Detected in LA County since 1973 along with Record High Rabid Bat Detections: Recommendations for Veterinarians and Staff

Key Points:

- In September 2026, [LA County Department of Public Health detected a rabies-positive raccoon](#) in the Westlake Village area of LA County. This is the first rabid raccoon detected in LA County since 1973. It was confirmed that the raccoon was infected with a bat variant of rabies.
- As of October 9, 2026, 75 rabid bats were detected in LA County, breaking the yearly record of 69 rabid bats that was set in 2025. Bats remain the reservoir species for the rabies virus in LA County.

Dear Veterinary Colleague,

First Rabid Raccoon Detected in LA County Since 1973

In September 2026, LA County Department of Public Health detected a rabies-positive raccoon in Westlake Village. This is the first rabid raccoon detected in LA County since 1973. The raccoon was found in a residential backyard where a pet dog had access and may have had direct contact with the rabid raccoon. The dog was up to date on its rabies vaccines at the time of the raccoon encounter, and an immediate rabies vaccine booster was administered. Veterinary Public Health placed the dog under a home quarantine for health monitoring for 30 days. Four people at a worksite may have been exposed to the raccoon and were recommended to receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.

Variant testing by the California Department of Public Health confirmed that the raccoon was infected with a bat rabies virus variant, indicating that the raccoon was most likely infected via contact with a rabid bat. This is consistent with our

knowledge of rabies epidemiology in LA County, where currently bat rabies variants are the only rabies variants known to be present. Bat rabies variants can spillover from bats to other mammals (wild or domestic). Pet and human encounters with skunks, coyotes, foxes and opossums still pose a rabies risk due to this potential spillover.

In 1973, when the last known confirmed rabid raccoon in LA County was detected, the skunk variant of rabies was still present in LA County, but this variant has not been detected in LA County since 1979. The last animal other than a bat confirmed to have rabies in LA County was a skunk infected with the bat variant of rabies in Long Beach in 2014.

Record Breaking Rabid Bat Detections in 2026

In addition to the unusual finding of this rabid raccoon, rabid bat detections in LA County continue to be high. As of October 8, 2026, 74 rabid bats have been detected in 2026, breaking the former record of 69 rabid bats set last year. Rabid bats have been found throughout LA County, but the Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys remain hot spots for rabid bat activity.

Bats are considered protected wildlife and play a vital role in the ecosystem by eating insects, pollinating plants, and spreading seeds. It is illegal to keep, injure, or kill bats. While only a small percentage (~1%) of bats in nature have rabies, in recent years 14-19% of the bats reported to and tested by LA County Public Health have been rabies positive. Bats reported to Public Health are primarily reported by LA County residents and are usually found acting abnormally (dead or not moving in the yard or in walkways, active during the daytime, encountered by pets, or inside of residences or businesses). The percent positive fluctuates throughout the year and typically has a small peak in late spring and a larger peak, reaching over 30%, in late summer.

When Someone Encounters a Bat

It is crucial that any bat found indoors in a home, or in areas where people or pets may have had direct contact, is not discarded or released outside. Any bat found in this scenario should be reported to local animal control so the bat can be retrieved and tested for rabies. Either contain the bat in a room if indoors or cover it with a box or bucket until animal control arrives. Bats have tiny teeth, and a bite or scratch

from a tooth may not leave a lasting mark but may still transmit rabies. Exposure risk to humans and pets can be ruled out if a bat tests negative for rabies.

Rabies testing of the bat is performed at **no cost to the reporter**. If the bat is released or discarded, the opportunity to test it is lost, and out of abundance of caution it must be assumed to have been rabid. People who had potential exposure to either a confirmed rabid bat, or a bat that was not tested, are usually recommended to receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Rabies PEP consists of a series of injections given over 2 weeks. Pets in these scenarios need to be vaccinated and quarantined for prolonged periods (1 month if up to date on rabies vaccination and 6 months if not up to date).

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) continues to recommend that persons who interact with animals that could be rabid should be [pre-vaccinated](#) for rabies, including veterinarians, technicians, and animal control officers. Rabies pre-vaccination does not eliminate the need for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) if a rabies exposure occurs but will simplify the process. Veterinary staff should also be educated on proper animal handling techniques and when and how to use personal protective equipment to decrease the risk of animal bites and contact with saliva or neural tissue.

Recommendations for Veterinarians:

- **Prevent rabies in pets.** Remind pet owners that rabies is fatal. Educate pet owners about rabies and rabies vaccinations in pets. All dogs and cats (including indoor-only cats and senior pets) should be kept up to date on rabies vaccinations, as many bats are found inside homes.
- **All pet encounters with bats and other wild mammals (raccoons, skunks, foxes, opossums, coyotes) are legally reportable to Veterinary Public Health.** [Use this reporting form to report domestic animal vs wild mammal interactions.](#)
- **Prevent the spread of rabies in the community.** Rabies vaccine boosters and quarantine are important measures to keep pets, pet owners and the community safe from rabies. Use [this chart](#) to

familiarize clinic staff with LA County rabies regulations and guidelines for what to do if a domestic pet has a possible rabies exposure.

- **Protect staff.** Veterinary and animal shelter staff who work directly with bats and animals that can be rabid should know how and when to use personal protective equipment (PPE) and are recommended to be [pre-vaccinated](#) against rabies.
- **Do not handle or try to rehabilitate sick bats or wildlife unless you are a licensed professional.** Post this infographic at your facility to educate all staff and pet owners on [what to do if a bat is found](#).

Resources

LA County Veterinary Public Health

- [General Rabies Information](#)
- [Rabies for Veterinarians and Animal Control](#)
- [October 5, 2026, Press Release, First Rabid Raccoon Case in LA County Since 1973 Under Investigation - Public Health reminds everyone to never touch wild animals and ensure pets are up to date on vaccines](#)
- [What to Do if You Find a Bat flyer](#)
- [Animal Bite and Rabies-Related Incident Reporting Forms](#)
- [Rabies Quarantine and Booster Guidance](#)

California Department of Public Health

- [General Rabies Information](#)
- [Rabies Information for Veterinarians](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- [General Rabies Information](#)

- [Rabies Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Guidance](#)
- [Rabies Status by Country](#)

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