



Health, Housing, and Community Services Department

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## CITY OF BERKELEY PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

### Addressing Leptospirosis at Harrison Street Encampment

June 10, 2026

**ALERT** – conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**ADVISORY** – provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**UPDATE** – provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

#### I. KEY MESSAGES

- **Risk to the General Public Remains Extremely Low:** as an update to the [January 12, 2026, Health Alert](#)<sup>1</sup>, risk of contracting leptospirosis from rats remains very low for the vast majority of Berkeley residents and business owners.
- **Risk to people living in encampments, RVs, or other locations with a high burden of rats infected with Leptospirosis:** people who have had exposure to rats and show symptoms of illnesses should seek medical care and treatment quickly.
- **The best way to protect dogs** Vaccination for dogs against Leptospirosis is considered a core annual vaccine by the Animal Hospital Association – a respected industry standard
- **Harrison Street Status & Mitigation Data:** No human cases have been associated with encampments on and around Harrison Street, and no new canine infections have been reported to public health since the first two in late 2025.
- **Recent Human Cases Identified:** Two human Leptospirosis cases were identified in May 2026 in the City of Berkeley. Both individuals had been living in a severely rat-infested RV about one mile from the Harrison Street encampment. Tragically, one of the patients died and one recovered after a lengthy

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<sup>1</sup> [https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/January\\_12%2C\\_2026\\_Lepto\\_Health\\_Alert\\_Final.pdf](https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/January_12%2C_2026_Lepto_Health_Alert_Final.pdf)

hospitalization. Both patients had delayed access to medical care which is thought to have contributed to the severity of their disease. These are the first human cases of Leptospirosis in Berkeley in more than a decade. These human cases highlight the potentially serious health risk to humans living in environments with rat infestations. Exposure to rats infected with Leptospirosis poses a potentially serious health risk to humans and dogs.

- **Based on environmental and clinical data, the City is retiring the Harrison street encampment geographic risk zones ("Red" and "Yellow" zones)** established in this [January 12<sup>th</sup> Public Health Alert](#). Given this new evidence that high-Leptospirosis-positive rat populations are not limited to the Harrison Corridor, the city is now shifting to a broader citywide prevention strategy focused on high-risk environments including RVs and encampments with rat infestations. The Berkeley Public Health response is pivoting away from localized geographic containment to citywide sanitation, vector suppression, and targeted hygiene outreach for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, vehicle residency or who are otherwise living in heavily rodent infested environments.
- **Vector Control, in conjunction with Commercial Pest Control services, should exterminate rats in areas with a high rate of Leptospirosis in rats.** The general public should not attempt to exterminate rats: If the public suspects rat infestation in an area with risk of Leptospirosis, they should contact their pest control vendor or Alameda County Vector Control Services at (510) 567-6800.
- **What has the City of Berkeley done to mitigate the risk of Leptospirosis in humans and dogs at the Harrison Street encampment?**
  - Environmental testing conducted by UC Davis researchers in February 2026 detected no Leptospirosis in Codornices Creek. A total of 11 water samples and 11 mud samples were collected from the creek.
  - 14 Dogs at the Harrison street encampment were tested by UC Davis researchers and all were negative for Leptospirosis. Owners were also offered free vaccination to protect their dogs against future exposure to Leptospirosis.
  - Debris Removal: The City has removed 40 tons of garbage since February 2026 from the Harrison Street encampment in an attempt to minimize environmental conditions that attract rats.
  - Direct Community Outreach: Public health staff conducted 5 educational outreach events directly with occupants of the Harrison Street encampment to provide housing resources, clean clothing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and clear guidance on minimizing exposure risks. Ongoing efforts, including distribution of educational material directly to homeless individuals, are underway (see attached informational flyer).
  - **Ongoing Surveillance:** The City of Berkeley, in partnership with Alameda County Vector Control, have been continuously trapping and testing rats for Leptospirosis at the Harrison street encampment and in the area where the RV was parked with the two human cases (1 mile from Harrison Street encampment). This new testing has continued to show a high prevalence of Leptospirosis in the rats tested, which is above expected baseline levels in California urban rat populations.

## **Public Health Contact Information**

For community questions on leptospirosis please contact the City of Berkeley Lepto Information Line: (510) 981-5460 or Email: [leptoinformation@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:leptoinformation@berkeleyca.gov).

To request Vector Control Services please contact Alameda County Vector Control Services. (510) 567-6800.



June 10, 2026

## RV and Encampment Occupants: Rat Advisory

*Keep food and water in closed containers; avoid exposure to wild rats; seek treatment quickly*

Wild rats carry a variety of diseases. People and dogs can get infected through contact with wild rats and their urine, feces, saliva, bites or scratches. Rats can also carry ticks, mites, or fleas that can spread diseases. Do not poison rats as they often wander into open areas before dying. These Carcasses can be deadly to pets or wildlife.

Rat-borne diseases are monitored around encampments in the City of Berkeley by Alameda County Vector Control and include the following:

- Leptospirosis
- Flea borne typhus
- Salmonellosis

### TAKE STEPS TO LOWER RISK

The best way to prevent transmission of disease by rats in your area is to:

- Keep food and water in closed containers
- Minimize trash and items that could create rat nests
- Avoid exposure to rats or their body fluids

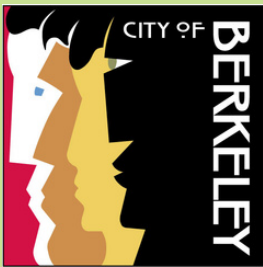
### IF YOU DO NOT FEEL WELL, SEEK TREATMENT QUICKLY

If you have been around or in contact with rats AND you feel sick, get medical help quickly and inform your medical provider that you have been exposed to wild rats.

If you do not have a Primary Care Provider or are a LifeLong Medical Care Patient:

- Call: Berkeley Trust Health Center (510) 486-3463
- Operating Hours:
  - Monday-Friday 8:30am -4:30pm, except Tuesday when hours are 10:00am-4:30pm
  - 830 University Ave, Berkeley, CA (Near the corner of University Ave and Sixth Street)

For questions contact the City of Berkeley Lepto information line: (510) 981-5460

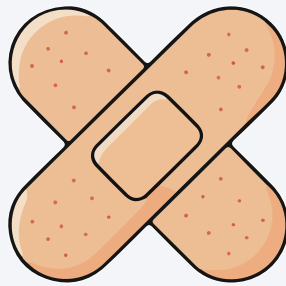


# Leptospirosis: Recommendations for the general public

Leptospirosis is a sickness caused by bacteria that lives in water that can spread to people and dogs. You can get it from water, dirt, or food that was infected by the urine of infected rats or dogs



**Wear protective clothing**



**Cover scratches or cuts with waterproof bandages**



**Don't wade or swim in potentially contaminated water**



**Wash or shower after potential exposure**



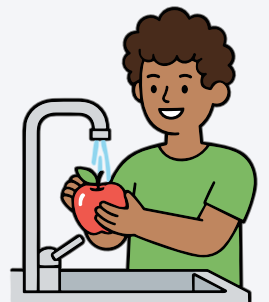
**Clean your wounds**



**Don't touch sick or dead animals**



**Consume clear, clean, drinking-water**



**Wash fruits and vegetables picked from gardens or farms in this area**

Leptospirosis is treatable. The disease is transmitted to humans and animals when the contaminated water touches mucous membranes – such as eyes, nose, mouth, or cuts to the skin. Most people have no symptoms. However, if you think you were exposed in this area and have flu-like symptoms – fever, chills, headache, red eyes, and muscle aches – contact your primary care provider, such as the one listed on your Medi-Cal card for an urgent appointment.

If you do not have a medical provider, contact Lifelong Trust Health Center for screening and treatment

830 University Ave., Berkeley, CA 94710

Berkeley Public Health Leptospirosis voicemail to leave tips, questions: 510.981.5460, [leptoinformation@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:leptoinformation@berkeleyca.gov)

Updated June 5, 2026