



Health, Housing, and Community Services Department

Noemi Doohan, MD, PhD, MPH
Public Health Officer – Director

Scott Gilman
HHCS Director

HEALTH UPDATE

Five Rabies-Positive Bats Identified in the City of Berkeley in 2026 August 12, 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.

Summary

The City of Berkeley Public Health Division, in partnership with the City's Animal Control Services, Alameda County Vector Control and Public Health laboratories, and CDPH state laboratories, **has confirmed five rabies-positive bats in residential and commercial areas in 2026 in West and North Berkeley**. This represents an increase compared to the historical baseline of zero to two rabies-positive bats per year in the City of Berkeley between 2020 and 2025.

Background

When bats are reported to the City of Berkeley Animal Control Services, specimens are submitted for rabies testing through Alameda County Public Health and CDPH state laboratories. In California, bats are the primary animal reservoir for rabies. Nationally, bats account for approximately one-third of all animal rabies cases and have been implicated in over 80% of domestically acquired human rabies infections since 2000.

What Providers Need to Know

Rabies infection in the United States is rare but is nearly 100% fatal once clinical symptoms develop. It is also nearly 100% preventable with timely administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). Provider awareness of local trends and rabies transmission factors is critical to informing timely PEP decisions.

When to consider PEP for bat exposures:

PEP is indicated for any person with a bite, scratch, or mucous membrane exposure to an animal with potential to transmit rabies, including but not limited to, bats. Critically, PEP should also be considered in the following scenarios even when a bite or scratch cannot be confirmed:

- A sleeping person awakens to find a bat in the room
- A bat is found in a room with a previously unattended child, a person with cognitive impairment, or an intoxicated person
- Any situation where there is a reasonable probability that unrecognized direct contact with a bat may have occurred

Bat bites frequently produce trivial or inapparent wounds that may not be visible on examination. The absence of a visible bite wound does not rule out exposure. Contact with bat guano, blood, or urine alone does not constitute a rabies exposure and is not an indication for PEP.

Please reference the up-to-date CDC guidelines for PEP doses and initiation here: [Rabies Post-exposure Prophylaxis Guidance | Rabies | CDC](#)

Wound care: Immediate and thorough washing of all bite wounds and scratches with soap and water is a critical first step and has been shown to markedly reduce the likelihood of rabies infection. Wounds should not be sutured unless absolutely necessary. [Tetanus prophylaxis](#) and antibiotics should be administered as indicated.

Reporting: All suspected rabies exposures should be reported to the City of Berkeley Communicable Disease Program. Please report animal bites via the [Animal Bite Incident and Rabies Exposure Report Form](#), ensuring completion of all the appropriate fields. Additionally, providers are encouraged to contact City of Berkeley Communicable Disease for assistance with risk assessment and PEP decision-making.

Additional resources:

- [CDPH IDB Guidance for Human and Animal Rabies](#)
- [California Compendium of Rabies Control and Prevention](#)
- [CDC Yellow Book: Rabies chapter](#)
- [Alameda County Animal Bites and Rabies in Alameda County, 2019 - 2025](#)

For Questions

Providers may contact the [City of Berkeley Communicable Disease Program](#) for additional information or assistance with reporting processes.

City of Berkeley Communicable Disease Program

Confidential Phone: 510-981-5292

Confidential Fax: 510-981-5345

Email: COBCD@berkeleyca.gov