

ENVIRONMENT

San Mateo County sees big jump in rabid bats after two years with no cases



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A rabid bat was found at Little People's Park at the Portola Valley Town Center in October 2025. Photo by Anna Hoch-Kenney.

New San Mateo County data from 2025 shows a significant jump in the number of bats that tested positive for rabies after two years without finding any cases.

All of the positive tests occurred in the last three months of the year, according to the county. Of the 13 bats tested between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, six were positive for rabies. None of the 30 bats tested earlier in 2025 were found to carry the virus, according to data San Mateo County Health released on Feb. 10.

In total, the county tested 140 animals in 2025, including 43 cats, 30 dogs and one unidentified animal, but only bats tested positive for the dangerous disease.

On Oct. 24, 2025, a dead bat found near Little People's Park playground at the Portola Valley Town Center tested positive for rabies. At the time, San Mateo County Health **encouraged** anyone who might have been exposed to it to contact their medical provider but no people or their animals came forward. On the same day, San Mateo County Health officials tested a rabid bat in Half Moon Bay.

It was the first positive rabies test in San Mateo County in two years.

Statewide, bats account for most of the rabid animals that are identified, according to the California Department of Public Health. Between 2015 and 2020, 1,190 rabid bats were identified statewide, including 16 in San Mateo County.

None of the 138 animals, including 37 bats, that San Mateo County tested for rabies in 2024 were positive. Over the past 11 years, an average of two bats a year tested positive for rabies.

Live animals can't be tested for rabies because the only definitive test requires brain tissue, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rabies is an especially dangerous disease because once symptoms appear, there is no treatment and it is almost always fatal, according to the county. Symptoms of rabies include neuropathic pain, paralysis, seizures and sensory and motor deficits.

Rabies can spread to humans and other animals if they are bitten by a rabid animal or if the saliva or brain tissue from the infected animal makes contact with broken skin, the eyes, nose or mouth. You cannot become infected just by being near a rabid animal, petting it, or through contact with animal excrement.

Bats are considered a high-risk animal for rabies transmission because all bat species are able to transmit the virus. The county said that bat bite marks are very small and can go unnoticed.

If residents find a bat in their room after sleeping or see a bat in a room with a child or a mentally impaired or intoxicated person, they should seek medical treatment and get the bat tested, according to the county.

The county also encouraged residents not to discard or release any bat that may have come into contact with humans so it can be tested. Even if there are no obvious bite marks, people are asked to contact the [Peninsula Humane Society](#) at 650-340-7022 so the bat can be tested for rabies.

Aside from bats, in the U.S., raccoons, skunks and foxes can also be a reservoir for rabies. However, rabid raccoons are rarely reported outside of the eastern United States, according to the county.