

2011 August

Bats, Humans, & Rabies



Mexican free-tailed bats, Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. © Dave Feliz.

Keep bats and humans away from each other to protect the health of both.

Healthy bats are a vital part of our ecosystem and play an important role in the control of mosquitoes and insect populations that are harmful to agriculture. Bats are wild animals and, like all mammals, they are susceptible to rabies. Every year, a number of Yolo County residents undergo costly rabies prevention therapy after handling bats.

Yolo County residents are strongly advised to avoid direct contact with bats, especially bats that appear to be sick or are showing abnormal behaviors, such as lying on the ground or being out during the daytime. Any bats, healthy, sick, or dead, that have come in contact with people, pets, or livestock, should be isolated and contained for testing whenever possible. All bats found inside the home, regardless of contact, should be reported immediately to Environmental Health at (530) 666-8646 or to Yolo County Animal Services at (530) 668-5287.

Bats by the Numbers...^{48,49,74}

- Bats may attain speeds of 40-60 miles per hour when hunting insects.
- A small bat can eat 1,200 mosquitoes per hour.
- Some insects can hear bats up to 100 feet away and will avoid areas occupied by bats.
- On average, 1 in 5 bats tested for rabies at the Yolo County Public Health Lab are found to be positive for rabies. These bats are typically found sick or dead on the ground and have often been handled by a child or pet. In 2008, 21 bats found in Yolo County tested positive for rabies.

Breastfeeding Awareness Month • National Immunization Awareness Month • Medic Alert Awareness Month

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 World Breastfeeding Week	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

Mexican Free-Tailed Bats

There are several Mexican free-tailed bat colonies in Yolo County, including one of the largest colonies in California in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.⁴⁷ Large colonies of Mexican free-tails are nursery colonies where bats congregate to bear and raise their pups. A single pup is born each year from June to mid-July. The young take their first flight at about five weeks of age, usually in August.⁴⁸



Mexican free-tailed bats, Yolo Causeway. © Dave Feliz.

Yolo County Public Health Laboratory⁷⁴

The Yolo County Public Health Laboratory plays a crucial role in the control of infectious disease in Yolo County. The lab provides local testing to ensure timely and accurate laboratory results and reports. Lab services include: bacteriology (isolation and identification of bacteria that cause diarrheal illness, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis, respiratory illness, and certain bioterrorism organisms), mycology (fungal organisms), parasitology (intestinal parasites and malaria), West Nile virus serology, and rabies testing in animals. In 2008, the Public Health Lab performed 2,600 lab tests (1,888 water bacteriology, 242 rabies, 234 tuberculosis, 236 other tests).

In conjunction with other local public health laboratories and the California state laboratories, the laboratory also offers nitrite/nitrate testing in water, virology (serology and isolation), HIV and syphilis serology, and other communicable disease tests.

In the near future, the Yolo County Public Health Laboratory hopes to offer PCR testing (a molecular test procedure) to our local health care providers. Conducting PCR locally will allow for rapid diagnosis and detection of unusual diseases, like H1N1 influenza. We will start with influenza testing and then expand to other infectious organisms, such as norovirus, *Bordetella pertussis*, etc.



Stanley Kwan, Yolo County Public Health Lab Director. Courtesy: Tim Wilson.

- Yolo Co. Animal Services
- Yolo Co. Health Dept., Environmental Health Division
- NorCalBats (bat rehabilitation and rescue)
- Yolo Basin Foundation (bat colony seasonal program)

Call (530) 668-5287
Call (530) 666-8646
www.norcalbats.org
www.yolobasin.org