



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2009

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## **MORE GROUND SQUIRRELS TEST POSITIVE FOR PLAGUE** *County Warns Campers and Hikers to Take Precautions*

County Vector Control officials announced today that blood samples collected from two ground squirrels at the Doane Valley Campground on Palomar Mountain have tested positive for plague.

"It is not unusual to find plague in our local mountains in the warm summer months, so campers should always avoid contact with squirrels and their fleas," said Jack Miller, Acting Director of the Department of Environmental Health. "Be careful to pitch tents away from squirrel burrows, do not feed squirrels and warn your children not to play with squirrels."

Plague is a bacterial disease of wild rodents that can be transmitted to humans through the bite of infected fleas. To date, there have been no locally acquired human cases of plague reported in San Diego County. Flea populations are monitored, and control measures are taken as necessary at campgrounds to reduce the potential for human exposure.

Plague warning signs are posted in all areas where plague has been confirmed. Visitors, hikers and campers in rural mountain areas should look for posted signs and always follow these precautions to prevent contact with the fleas:

- Avoid contact ground squirrels, chipmunks and other wild animals.
- Do not feed, touch or handle wild animals.
- Do not rest, camp or sleep near animal burrows in the ground.
- Protect pets by keeping them on a leash, use flea control, or best of all, leave pets at home.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become ill within one week of visiting a known plague area. Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, chills and tender, swollen lymph nodes.
- Do not touch sick or dead animals.

For more information about plague surveillance, call the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or visit [www.SDVector.com](http://www.SDVector.com).

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