

MONTHLY COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026

Volume 10, Issue 9: October 15, 2026

RABIES

Rabies is an acute viral zoonotic disease of mammals, most frequently transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected animal. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system, causing a progressive encephalomyelitis that is nearly always fatal.

Symptoms in humans include anxiety, confusion, paralysis, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia. Once symptoms begin, no treatment has proven consistently effective. The incubation period varies but is usually three to eight weeks. Fortunately, [rabies post-exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\)](#) is safe and effective; PEP consists of rabies vaccine and human rabies immune globulin, which can prevent disease when administered as soon as possible after a suspected exposure to rabies virus.

Human deaths from rabies remain common in under-developed countries around the world, where access to health care and rabies PEP is limited. Human rabies is [uncommon](#) in the United States, declining over the last century from 100 cases per year to only one to three cases annually in recent years. In California, the last human rabies case was in [Fresno County](#) in 2024 in a person who handled a bat approximately four weeks prior to feeling sick. The last human rabies case in San Diego County was in 2001 in a person who was bitten by a dog in the Philippines. In the United States, rabies deaths are often attributed to unrecognized exposures, such as unnoticed or seemingly insignificant [contact with a bat](#), which can result in failure to seek medical attention.

Table 1. Animals Tested for Rabies at San Diego County Public Health Laboratory, 2021-2026*

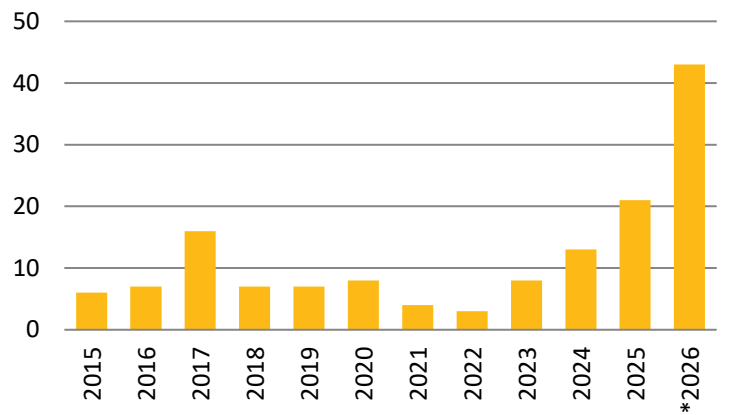
Animal Type	Positive	Negative	% Positive	Total Submitted†
Bat	92	354	20.6%	489
Cat	0	692	-	701
Coyote	0	28	-	29
Dog	0	1,704	-	1,722
Raccoon	0	58	-	62
Skunk	0	118	-	122
Other‡	0	39	-	43
Total	92	2,993	3.0%	3,168

*2026 data are year-to-date; data current as of 09/30/2026.

†Animals unsatisfactory for testing or yielding indeterminate results were excluded from positivity calculations.

‡Other animals include bobcat (2), fox (5), opossum (6), rabbit (1), rat (4), rodent (1), squirrel (10), sheep (1), goat (1), mountain lion (3), unspecified (9).

Figure 1. Animal Rabies Cases, San Diego County, 2015-2026*



*2026 data are year-to-date; data current as of 09/30/2026. Data are grouped by CDC disease years and subject to change as additional information becomes available. All animal cases during this time period were bats.

The epidemiology of animal rabies in the United States has changed over the years. Prior to 1960, most cases of animal rabies were in domestic animals. Now, [over 90%](#) of rabies cases detected in animals in the United States (3,760 reported in [2023](#), including 202 in California) are in wild animals, primarily bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Bats were the most frequently reported rabid wildlife species in the United States in 2023.

Since 2015, 143 animals have tested positive for rabies in San Diego County; all were bats. So far this year there have been 43 positive bats, more than double the number that tested positive in 2025.

A domestic animal has not tested positive for rabies in San Diego County in over 40 years. However, hundreds of [domestic animals in the United States](#)

Continued on next page

The Monthly Communicable Disease Surveillance Report is a publication of the County of San Diego Public Health Services Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch (EISB). EISB identifies, investigates, registers, and evaluates communicable, reportable, and emerging diseases and conditions to protect the health of the community. The purpose of this report is to present trends in communicable disease in San Diego County. To subscribe to this report, visit the [Data and Reports](#) page on the Epidemiology Program website (www.sdepi.org) and click on the subscribe link.

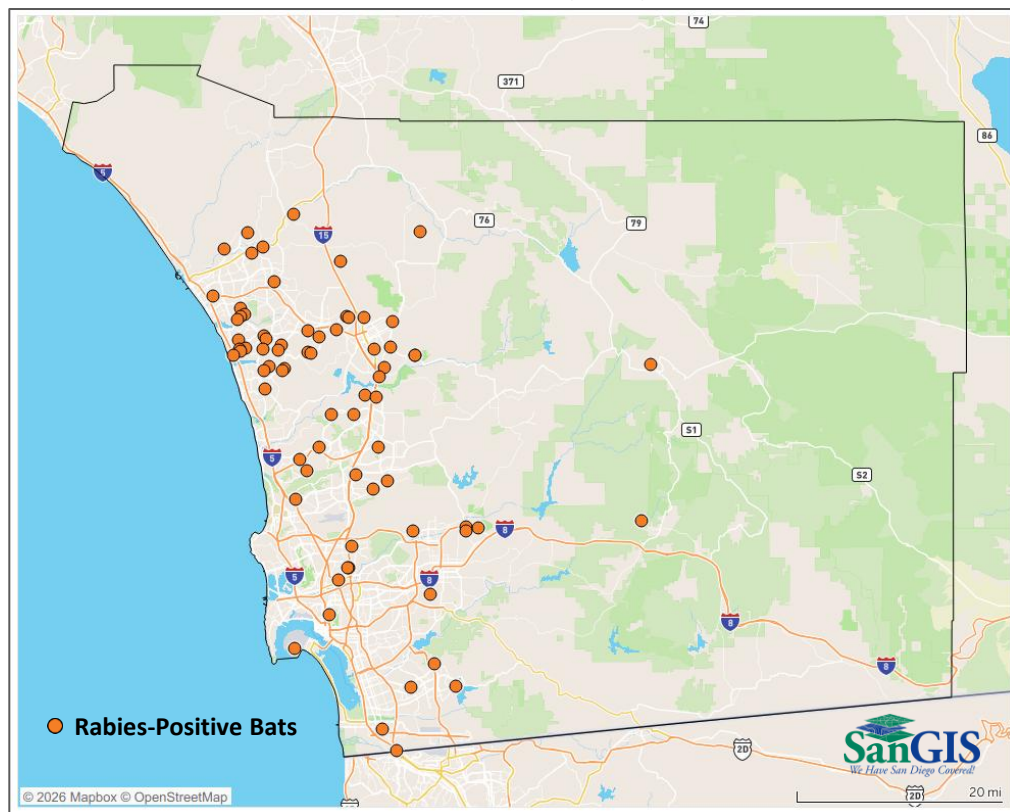
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RABIES, continued

Figure 2. Bats Testing Positive for Rabies by Location Found, San Diego County, 2021–2026* (N=92)



*Data current as of 09/30/2026. Data are subject to change as additional information becomes available. Generally, only animals that have had contact with humans or pets are tested for rabies; counts are not reflective of all animal rabies in the county.

Federal Resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Rabies website](#)
- [CDC Rabies Vaccination website](#)
- [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\) - Rabies](#)
- [Rabies Surveillance in the United States during 2023](#)

State Resources

- [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) Rabies website](#)
- [CDPH California Compendium of Rabies Control and Prevention](#)
- [Investigation, Management, and Prevention of Animal Bites in California](#)
- [CDPH Rabies Surveillance in California Annual Reports](#)

Local Resources

- [County of San Diego Rabies website](#)

[test positive for rabies](#) each year.

Bites from domestic dogs and cats should be considered a potential risk for rabies exposure, with increased risk when there is no evidence of animal ownership, the bite is unprovoked, the animal is ill appearing, or the animal is not up-to-date on rabies vaccination. Although the canine rabies virus variant is not present in the United States, pets can get rabies from contact with infected wild animals or can be imported with rabies from rabies-endemic countries. To prevent rabies: keep pets up to date on rabies vaccines; stay a safe distance from wildlife (do not feed or touch); if you are bitten by an animal, thoroughly clean the wound and contact your healthcare provider.

In the United States, approximately [100,000 people receive PEP](#) each year to prevent rabies infection after a potential exposure. From July to August 2026, there was a

nationwide increase in reported human exposures to rabid or possibly rabid animals and PEP administration, including in California and San Diego County. In response, the CDC released a [health alert advisory](#) providing guidance to clinicians, health departments, and the public. There is currently no shortage of rabies PEP in the United States.

Outdoor activity and animal-human interaction commonly increase during the summer and early fall, which leads to an increase in rabies-related inquiries to the Epidemiology Unit and animals submitted to the [San Diego County Public Health Laboratory](#) for rabies testing. Bats are the most likely animal species to test positive for rabies year-round and in locations throughout San Diego County.

Suggested citation:

Villalobos M, Cua LS, Trumbull E, Nelson J. Rabies. County of San Diego Monthly Communicable Disease Report 2026; 10(9):1-2.

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Table 2. Select Reportable Diseases		2026			Prior Years		
		Sept.	August	January - Sept. (YTD)	2025 YTD	Avg YTD, 2023-2025	2025 Total
Disease and Case Inclusion Criteria (C,P,S)							
Botulism (Foodborne, Infant, Wound, Other)	C,P	0	0	1	3	2.3	4
Brucellosis	C,P	0	0	2	0	1.3	0
Campylobacteriosis	C,P	122	113	916	854	870.0	1,199
<i>Candida auris</i>	C	21	21	152	130	101.3	169
Chickenpox, Hospitalization or Death	C,P	0	0	2	2	4.0	2
Chikungunya	C,P	0	0	1	0	0.7	1
Coccidioidomycosis	C	73	60	573	514	429.7	663
Cryptosporidiosis	C,P	22	35	150	114	107.7	154
Cyclosporiasis	C,P	0	2	32	20	17.3	21
Dengue Virus Infection	C,P	0	1	5	12	22.3	17
Encephalitis, All	C	0	2	20	25	28.7	37
Giardiasis	C,P	23	24	182	192	186.0	250
Hepatitis A, Acute	C	0	0	3	7	17.0	11
Hepatitis B, Acute	C	0	0	12	14	12.3	15
Hepatitis B, Chronic	C,P	31	52	425	544	513.3	704
Hepatitis C, Acute	C,P	2	10	70	79	82.0	93
Hepatitis C, Chronic	C,P	162	137	921	1,102	1,440.7	1,391
Legionellosis	C	9	4	81	53	58.7	79
Listeriosis	C	4	2	12	7	8.7	10
Lyme Disease	C,P	2	0	4	7	7.0	8
Malaria	C	1	0	5	13	12.0	16
Measles (Rubeola)	C	0	0	0	1	1.7	1
Meningitis, Aseptic/Viral	C,P,S	5	4	43	57	62.7	93
Meningitis, Bacterial	C,P,S	2	1	27	38	32.0	51
Meningococcal Disease	C,P	1	0	2	9	5.7	11
Mumps	C,P	28	0	28	7	2.7	8
Pertussis	C,P	7	12	191	267	288.3	342
Rabies, Animal	C	4	15	43	18	10.3	21
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	C,P	0	0	0	1	2.3	1
Salmonellosis (Non-Typhoid/Non-Paratyphoid)	C,P	87	82	680	716	590.0	928
Shiga toxin-Producing <i>E. coli</i> (including O157)	C,P	18	29	233	231	204.3	301
Shigellosis	C,P	56	46	362	305	344.3	400
Typhoid Fever	C,P	0	2	3	1	3.3	2
Vibriosis	C,P	7	7	53	42	41.7	59
West Nile Virus Infection	C,P	6	5	14	0	0.7	0
Yersiniosis	C,P	12	27	144	134	104.0	160
Zika Virus	C,P	0	0	1	1	0.7	1

Case counts are provisional and subject to change as additional information becomes available. Cases are grouped into calendar months and calendar years on the basis of the earliest of the following dates: onset, lab specimen collection, diagnosis, death, and report received. Counts may differ from previously or subsequently reported counts due to differences in inclusion or grouping criteria, late reporting, or updated case information. Inclusion criteria (C,P,S = Confirmed, Probable, Suspect) based on Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CSTE/CDC) surveillance case criteria. Includes San Diego County resident cases only.

[San Diego County Sexually Transmitted Infection Data](#) | [San Diego County Tuberculosis Data](#)

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**Figure 3. Select Enteric Infections by Month
October 2025 – September 2026**

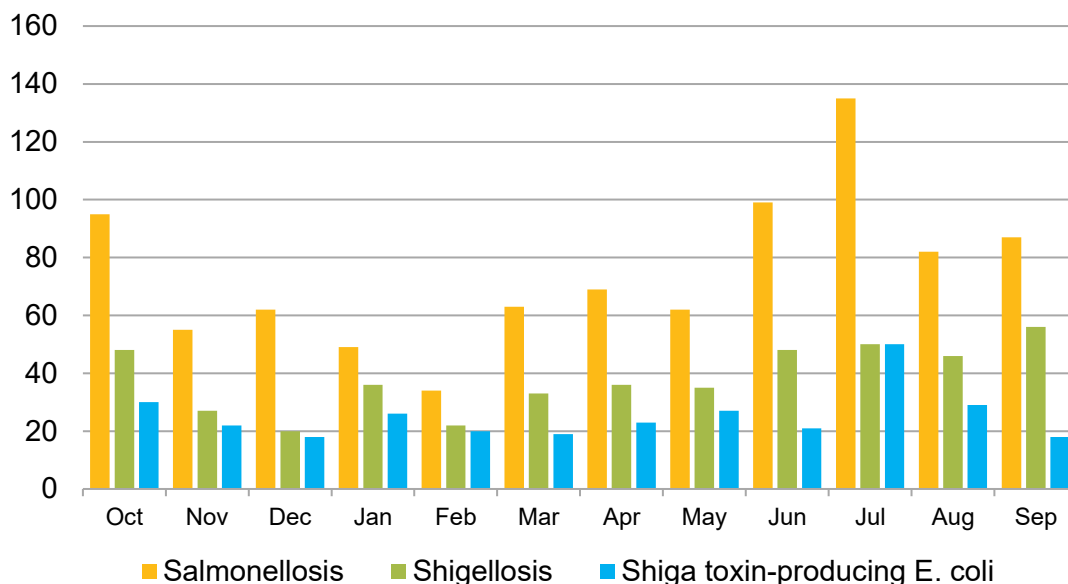
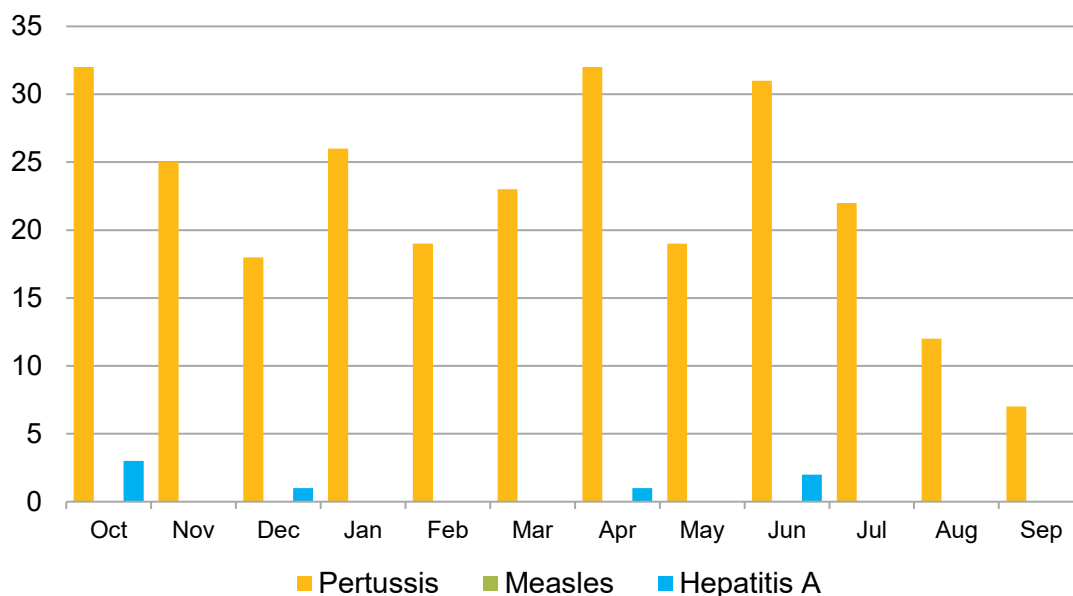


**Figure 4. Select Vaccine-Preventable Infections by Month
October 2025 – September 2026**



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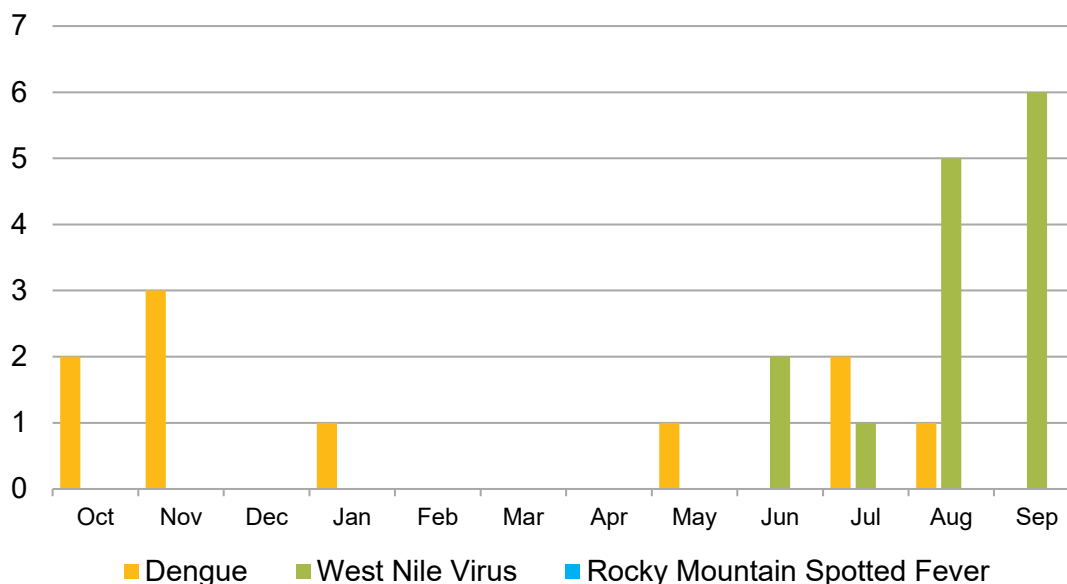


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**Figure 5. Select Vector-Borne Infections by Month
October 2025 – September 2026**



See the County disease-specific webpages, for more information on [West Nile virus](#) and [Dengue](#).

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Disease Reporting in San Diego County

San Diego County communicable disease surveillance is a collaborative effort among Public Health Services, hospitals, medical providers, laboratories, and the [San Diego Health Connect](#) Health Information Exchange (HIE). The data presented in this report are the result of this effort.

Reporting is crucial for disease surveillance and detection of disease outbreaks. Under the California Code of Regulations, Title 17 (Sections [2500](#), [2505](#), and [2508](#)), public health professionals, medical providers, laboratories, schools, and others are mandated to report more than 80 diseases or conditions to San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency.

To report a communicable disease, contact the Epidemiology Program by phone at (619) 692-8499 or download and print a Confidential Morbidity Report form and fax it to (858) 715-6458. For urgent matters on evenings, weekends or holidays, dial (858) 565-5255 and ask for the Epidemiology Program duty officer. For more information, including a complete list of reportable diseases and conditions in California, visit the Epidemiology Program website, www.sdepi.org.

Tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV disease are covered by other programs within Public Health Services. For information about reporting and data related to these conditions, search for the relevant program on the Public Health Services website, <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs.html>.