

Public Health Services Update

July 2, 2018

Dear Kern County Health Care Provider:

This letter is being sent to call your attention to some important health updates in Kern County. Similar publications will be distributed quarterly or more often if the need arises.

- **Ongoing risk of rabies infection from animal bites:**

Rabies virus is transmitted through saliva and nervous tissue. Rabies virus continues to be identified in animals throughout the state of California, including in Kern County. Bats are the most commonly identified animals with rabies in Kern County, followed by skunks. Other wildlife (raccoons, foxes, coyotes) are susceptible to rabies. In general, small mammals (squirrels, chipmunks, rats, mice, rabbits) are low risk for rabies transmission to humans because they rarely survive encounters with rabid carnivores. Typically, domestic animals including pets (dogs, cats) and livestock (horses, cattle, sheep, goats) are infected through exposure to wild animals. No dogs in Kern County have been identified with rabies for more than a decade; a cat was identified with rabies as recently as 2012.

- Whenever an animal bite or other animal exposure occurs to a patient, assess the risk of rabies.
- Refer patients in need of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to the emergency department and counsel the patient on the urgency receiving PEP as soon as possible. Please do not refer patients to the Kern County Public Health Services Department (KCPHSD) as patients often need wound care for the bite/exposure, which cannot be provided at the KCPHSD clinic.
- Report all animal bites/potential rabies exposure to Animal Control.


If you have any questions about rabies risk in an animal and other rabies related questions please contact KCPHSD at (661) 321-3000. Additional information can also be found on the [Rabies Surveillance and Prevention webpage](#).

- **Coming Soon: Kern County Opioid Symposium will be held in the fall**

This event will update providers regarding Clinical and Legal Considerations for Prescribing Controlled Substances. Attendees will learn about pain management, drug options for acute pain control, discuss red flag indicators for prescriptions issued for reasons other than a legitimate medical purpose, and learn how to register and use the Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES). Registration will be free and CMEs will be available. More details to follow.

If you have any questions, please contact KCPHSD by phone at (661) 321-3000, via email at publichealth@kerncounty.com, or visit our [website](#).

Thank you,


Kristopher Lyon, MD
Interim Health Officer