



# RISK SIMPLIFIED

## RESOURCES

[California Department of Fish & Wildlife -  
Report a Bat Colony](#)

[California Department of Pesticide Regulation  
\(DPR\) - School IPM Program](#)

[Cal/OSHA - Zoonotic Aerosol Transmissible  
Diseases Hazards Fact Sheet](#)

[CDC / NIOSH - Histoplasmosis and Work](#)

[CDC / NIOSH - Histoplasma in the Environment](#)

[UC ANR Statewide IPM Program -  
Pest Notes: Bats](#)

## QUESTIONS

[Contact PRISM Risk Control](#)

Or call 916.850.7300

## Bat Control and Prevention

by Scarlett Sadler

Bats are beneficial to the environment, but when they enter schools or public buildings, they can create serious health and property concerns. Bat droppings (guano) may support the growth of fungi that cause histoplasmosis, a respiratory illness spread when contaminated dust is inhaled. Although histoplasmosis is rare in California, it remains an occupational hazard when guano accumulations are disturbed. Rabies is another hazard, but only if a person is bitten or if bat saliva comes into contact with an open wound, eyes, nose, or mouth. In addition to health risks, bat colonies can leave behind strong odors, cause staining, and damage structures. Schools and public agencies should have clear procedures in place to manage these hazards.

Recognizing the signs of bat activity is the first step. A single bat indoors is often a disoriented animal that has entered by mistake, while colonies may persist for years before being noticed. Indicators include guano deposits that are darker than bird droppings and often contain shiny insect parts, along with rub marks or stains near entry points such as chimneys, vents, or roof gaps. To reduce risk of colonies forming, agencies should consider routine inspections twice a year, once in the spring before maternity season begins, and again in the fall after colonies have dispersed.

When a bat is discovered inside a building, the priority should be given to protecting people and providing the animal a way to exit. Areas should be cleared and contained, with windows or exterior doors available for the bat to leave. Handling bats directly is not recommended; animal control or trained personnel should be contacted if removal is required. Any bat that may have had contact with a person should be reported to County Public Health so that exposure can be evaluated and, if needed, the bat collected for rabies testing.

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Colonies require a different approach. The most effective method is exclusion, which allows bats to leave but prevents them from returning. Entry points can be identified by observing bat activity at dusk, and exclusion devices such as netting or tubes are then installed. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife advises against excluding bats during the maternity season (spring through late summer in many areas) when young bats cannot yet fly. Once bats have left, buildings should be sealed using durable materials such as hardware cloth, vent screens, or chimney caps to prevent re-entry.

Certain bat control practices are not permitted or effective. No chemical repellents or pesticides are registered with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation for bat control. Ultrasonic devices have not been shown to deter bats, and trapping bats inside structures can lead to odor, insect infestations, and further health hazards. Mechanical deterrents, such as continuous lighting or fans that alter temperature and air flow, may make spaces less attractive to bats, but these measures are most effective when paired with exclusion and repairs.

Guano cleanup should be handled carefully, since disturbing dried droppings can release dust that carries fungal spores. While histoplasmosis is rare in California, Cal/OSHA requires employers to protect workers who may be exposed. Only trained staff or contractors should perform cleanup, using protective equipment such as respirators and gloves.

The California Healthy Schools Act requires each school site to maintain an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan covering pests such as bats that may pose health or safety risks. This includes documenting inspections, exclusions, repairs, staff training, and parent notifications when hazards are present. At the same time, schools are employers and must comply with Cal/OSHA workplace safety standards. Employees who may come into contact with guano or contaminated spaces must be protected through proper training, protective equipment, and safe cleanup procedures. Cities, counties, and other public agencies fall under the same Cal/OSHA requirements for protecting their workers.

A single bat indoors is often a minor event, while an established colony can create serious health and property issues if not addressed. Schools and public agencies should address bat issues by isolating and resolving individual incidents, using exclusion to remove colonies only outside of maternity season, and sealing structures to prevent re-entry. By following California's IPM requirements for schools, wildlife protection rules, and Cal/OSHA workplace safety standards, public entities can protect people and property while respecting the important ecological role bats play. For questions, contact [Risk Control](#).