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## **MEDIA ALERT**

### **OFFICIALS WARN NOVATO RESIDENTS OF ATTACKS BY SQUIRRELS**

The Marin Humane Society and Marin County Department of Health & Human Services are warning Novato residents about several cases of aggressive squirrels that have injured eight people in different attacks over the past two and half weeks.

All of the attacks have taken place in and around the intersection of Sutro Avenue and Vineyard Road in Novato. The attacks are described as a squirrel suddenly running up to the victims, crawling up their bodies, and biting them in various areas (hands, legs, arms, head). There have also been reported instances in which squirrels have jumped out of trees and attacked the victims.

The Marin Humane Society, the county department of Health and Human Services, and WildCare, are working together to gather information and coordinate a response to these attacks. Rabies in squirrels is exceedingly rare. While officials cannot say with certainty whether the attacks are all from the same squirrel, it is the most likely scenario. Officials suspect the squirrel was hand-raised and therefore lost its natural fear of humans. **Residents should never feed wildlife. Intentional feeding or knowingly providing food to wild animals in Marin County is prohibited.**

While rabies is extremely rare in squirrels, all of the victims are receiving anti-rabies treatment, as a precaution.

**Residents are urged to contact the Marin Humane Society at 415-883-4621 to report any aggressive or sick squirrels.**

Property owners can decrease their homes' and yards' attractiveness to squirrels by doing the following:

- Cutting back trees that overhang roofs or are close to telephone lines
- Screening or blocking all potential entrance sites, especially at the height of fence tops, telephone and power lines
- Removing bird feeders

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