

Peru saves bats blamed for coronavirus

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Authorities called Wednesday for worried Peruvians to stop killing bats after rescuing 200 that were going to be burnt by peasants believing them to be spreading the coronavirus.

There have been more than 400 cases and nine deaths from COVID-19 in Peru.

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"We must not distort the situation due to the pandemic. Bats are not our enemies," the National Service of Wild Forests and Fauna (SERFOR) said in a statement on Wednesday.

SERFOR called for calm after peasants in Culden, in the northern Cajamarca region, attacked bats with fire.

"The attackers attacked the mammals because they thought they were spreading the coronavirus," said the agency.

The bats were rescued by SERFOR staff and released in a cave far away from Culden.

SERFOR said bats can also be beneficial to humans as "70 percent of the species in the world feed off insects, many of which are harmful to agriculture and our health, like mosquitos that spread dengue and other diseases."

Jessica Galvez-Durand, who is in charge of wild fauna at SERFOR, said people should avoid eating [wild animals](#) and that using their flesh in medicines was also risky.

In some Asian countries such as China, where the coronavirus pandemic originated, bat meat is considered a delicacy.

Many experts believe a bat infecting a pangolin—a small, scaly endangered species—that was then eaten by people was the source of the novel coronavirus's transmission to humans.

Scientists believe the virus originated in [bats](#) but transferred to humans through another animal, perhaps pangolins whose meat is often used in health remedies.

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