



TULAREMIA FACT SHEET

What is tularemia?

Tularemia, also known as rabbit fever or deerfly fever, is a disease caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*. It is normally found in animals and occurs naturally in the United States.

How can people get the infection?

Rabbits, hares and small rodents are the animals most commonly infected with tularemia. Infections have been seen in other wild animals and occasionally domestic pets, as well as birds, reptiles and fish.

People can be exposed to the disease in several ways.

- Through the bite of an infected tick or biting flies
- Handling infected animal tissue or fluids
- Ingesting infected food or water
- Breathing in the bacteria
- Exposure in a laboratory

Ticks are the most common cause of human infection in the U.S., followed by contact with infected rabbits.

What are the symptoms in humans?

Symptoms usually appear 3 to 5 days after contact with the bacteria, but may take up to 14 days. Symptoms will vary depending on the type of exposure to the bacteria.

When the disease is spread by an infected tick or biting fly, the bite can become a sore and glands near the bite swell. Similar symptoms can develop from handling or skinning infected animals. A sore throat, stomach pain, diarrhea and vomiting can occur from ingesting contaminated food or water. When people breathe in the bacteria, symptoms can include fever, dry cough, muscle aches and pneumonia. An eye infection can occur if the bacteria get into the eyes. Tularemia is not known to spread from person to person.

How can your pet get the infection?

Tularemia can be spread by eating or touching infected tissues, by breathing in the bacteria, or by the bite of an infected tick or biting flies.

What are the symptoms in animals?

Animals that are infected through the bite of an infected tick or biting fly or eating infected tissue may take as long as 10 days to become ill. Breathing in the bacteria will result in sudden fever, tiredness, loss of appetite and a cough. Without treatment, death may occur within a few hours to a few days.

How can you prevent infection?

There are several steps you can take to help prevent infection.

- Control ticks and other parasites to prevent spread of the disease.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET on your skin, or treat clothing with a repellent containing permethrin, to prevent insect bites.
- Use gloves when handling or skinning animals.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked meat.
- Do not drink untreated water.
- Consult a veterinarian if your pet has a change in behavior.

Where can I get more information on tularemia?

www.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of information

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)