

Tularemia

What is tularemia?

Tularemia is a disease caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis* (*F. tularensis*) that can affect humans, domestic animals, and wildlife. Tularemia occurs naturally in the United States and is most often found in animals such as rabbits, hares, squirrels and other rodents. Ticks and biting flies can also transmit the bacteria to humans and animals. Reported cases of tularemia in Minnesota are rare, with between 0-3 cases in humans and 0-5 cases in animals each year.

How do people get tularemia?

People and animals most commonly get tularemia from a bite by an infected tick or fly, or following contact with an infected animal. Tularemia can be spread to humans from infected pets or wildlife, but is not spread person to person.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The signs and symptoms in people can vary. Illness generally starts with symptoms such as a fever, chills, and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms may also include skin or mouth ulcers, diarrhea, muscle aches, joint pain, cough, and weakness.

How soon do you get sick?

Symptoms usually appear 3 to 5 days after exposure to the bacteria, but may be as short as 1 day or take as long as 14 days.

Can my pets get tularemia?

Yes. In Minnesota, tularemia is most often reported in cats with symptoms of high fever, swollen lymph nodes, mouth ulcers, depression, and loss of appetite. Dogs rarely show signs of illness. Contact your veterinarian if your pet is sick and has been in contact with wildlife such as rabbits, hares, squirrels, or other rodents.

Can tularemia be treated?

Yes, a doctor can prescribe antibiotics to treat tularemia. Because tularemia is a rare disease in Minnesota, be sure to mention any exposure that could be associated with tularemia. Early recognition and treatment can help prevent serious illness.

Who is at highest risk for getting tularemia?

Veterinarians, hunters, trappers, landscapers, farmers, and people who spend time outdoors where ticks and biting flies are common are at higher risk for acquiring tularemia.

How can you prevent tularemia?

Limiting exposure to the bacteria is the best way to prevent tularemia. You can prevent exposure by:

- Avoiding contact with wild animals
- Wearing gloves when handling wild animals
- Using insect repellent to reduce the chance of a tick or fly bite
- Keeping cats indoors and not allowing pets to hunt small animals can protect you and your pets from getting tularemia

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