

Tularemia

Personal Health Fact Sheet

What is Tularemia?

*Tularemia is a bacterial disease associated with both animals and man caused by the organism *Francisella tularensis*. This bacterium is one of the most infectious agents known requiring inoculation or inhalation of as few as 10 organisms to cause disease. Although many wild animals are infected, occasionally certain domestic animals can be infected.*

How is it spread?

Tularemia is transmitted through the bites of arthropods (commonly ticks and deerflies) that have fed on an infected animal; by handling or ingesting insufficiently cooked meat of infected animal hosts; by drinking contaminated water; and by inhalation of dust from contaminated soil, grain, or hay. *F. tularensis* can also remain alive for weeks in the water, soil, low temperatures in water, straw and decaying animal carcasses.

Tularemia is not known to be spread from person to person, so people who have tularemia do not need to be isolated.

How is it treated?

People who have been exposed to *F. tularensis* should be treated as soon as possible. The disease can be fatal if it is not treated with the appropriate antibiotics.

How can we prevent Tularemia?

Rubber gloves should be worn when skinning or handling animals, especially rabbits. Wild rabbit and rodent meat should be cooked thoroughly before eating. Avoid bites of deer flies and ticks and avoid drinking, bathing, swimming, or working in untreated water. Instruct children not to handle any sick or dead animals.

A vaccine for tularemia is under review by the Food and Drug Administration and is not currently available in the United States.

SYMPTOMS OF Tularemia

The incubation period ranges from 1 to 14 days, usually 3 to 5 days.

- Fever
- Chills
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Dry cough
- Progressive weakness
- Pneumonia
- Ulcers on skin or mouth
- Swollen /painful lymph glands
- Swollen/painful eyes
- Sore throat



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