

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Tularemia



Burlington County Health Department

Raphael Meadow Health Center
15 Pioneer Boulevard
P.O. Box 6000
Westampton, N.J. 08060
Phone: 609-265-5548 Fax: 609-265-3152



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Burlington County Health Department
Health Starts Here

What is tularemia?

Tularemia is a rare bacterial disease that occurs in both animals and humans. It is especially common in rabbits, hares, and rodents. Humans can also become infected. Tularemia is very rare in New Jersey, with only 13 reported cases since 2005.

How is tularemia spread?

Tularemia can be spread to people in different ways. Humans may become infected through a bite of an infected tick. Humans can also become infected after touching, handling, or eating an infected animal. Animals most likely to be infected include rabbits and rodents such as voles, squirrels, muskrats, and beavers. Less common means of spread include contact with water or soil that has been contaminated by an infected animal, being bitten by an infected animal, or inhaling contaminated particles. Tularemia is not spread directly from person to person.

What are the symptoms of tularemia?

Symptoms of tularemia will vary depending on how the germs are transmitted. The most common symptoms include fever as high as 104°F, a slow-healing skin sore (ulcer), and swollen glands (lymph nodes). If the bacteria enter the body through the eye, it can cause irritation and swelling of the eye and swelling of the lymph nodes in

front of the ear. If it is inhaled, cough, chest pain, and difficulty breathing may occur.

Is there treatment for tularemia?

Tularemia is treated using antibiotics and usually lasts 10 to 21 days. It can be difficult to diagnose as it is so rare. For this reason, it is important to share with your doctor any likely exposure, such as tick and deer fly bites, or contact with sick or dead animals, and can be effectively treated with certain antibiotics.

What can you do to protect yourself?

There is no vaccine for tularemia. The best way to protect yourself is to avoid tick-infested areas and contact with potentially infected animals. You may reduce your risk of tularemia by taking the following measures:

- Use insect repellent containing 20%-30% DEET
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and long socks to keep ticks and deer flies off your skin
- Don't drink untreated surface water.
- Don't mow over or skin dead animals
- Use gloves when handling animals, especially rabbits, muskrats, prairie dogs, and other rodents
- Cook game meat thoroughly before eating

For more information contact the following:

- Your doctor, nurse or clinic
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/tularemia>
- The Burlington Health Department at (609)265-5548
- The New Jersey Department of Health website at:
www.nj.gov/health/cd/

January 2017