



Public Health
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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

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Several Area Cats Test Positive for Tularemia

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Encourages Citizens to be Aware of Symptoms and Health Precautions for Tularemia

Champaign, IL – The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) is encouraging area residents to know the symptoms of tularemia and to monitor their family and pets for the disease. Three cats from two households in Savoy were diagnosed with tularemia at the University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine in July and September. This may indicate an increased concern for this disease in the area. Tularemia is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis* found in animals (especially rodents, rabbits and hares). Humans and many animals can become infected with this bacteria. In the wild, animals can carry the organism and may die from infection.

Cats may prey on rabbits and rodents and become infected or they may become infected through tick exposure. Cats may develop a variety of symptoms including high fever, mouth ulcers, depression, enlarged lymph nodes and behavioral changes including not wanting to eat. Persons whose cats have contact with the outdoors should take their pet into the veterinarian if they should develop these symptoms.

People may also develop sudden fever, chills, headaches, diarrhea, joint pain, muscle aches, cough and weakness if they become infected with tularemia. People can become infected by handling pets or wild animals with tularemia, being bitten by ticks or by inhaling the organism. If you develop symptoms of tularemia see your health care provider.

To reduce the chances that your cat will become infected:

- Do not allow your cat to hunt outdoors
- Consult with your veterinarian to make sure your cat is protected from tick bites
- Report any unexplained large die-offs of rodents or rabbits to your local animal control

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To reduce the chance that you or your family member will become infected:

- Wear tick protection when outdoors
- Do not mow over sick or dead animals
- Do not handle wild animals
- Cook wild game meat thoroughly before eating and use gloves when handling the animal and preparing the meat for cooking
- Take any pet with symptoms of tularemia to the veterinarian

If you have questions about tularemia in humans, please contact Awaiz Vaid, Epidemiologist, with CUPHD at (217) 531-5360 or your health care provider. If you are a cat owner or have questions about tularemia in animals, please contact your veterinarian. Visit <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/tularemia/facts.asp> or http://www.avma.org/public_health/biosecurity/tularemia_facts.asp for additional information.

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