



Public Health
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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Rachella Thompson,
Communicable Disease Investigator
(217) 531-5361 / rthompson@c-uphd.org
Amy Roberts, Public Relations
(217) 531-4264 / aroberts@c-uphd.org

Additional Cats Test Positive for Tularemia

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Encourages Citizens to Keep Cats Indoors to Help Minimize Tularemia

Champaign, IL – The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) is encouraging area residents to keep cats indoors to reduce the likelihood of contracting tularemia. The Champaign-Urbana Public Health Districts has identified two additional cats positive for tularemia in Champaign-Urbana. Previously, five cats were diagnosed with tularemia at the University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine; one cat from Champaign and one from Urbana; and three cats from two households in Savoy. Tularemia is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis* found in animals (especially rodents, rabbits and hares).

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 eating. Persons whose cats have contact with the outdoors should take their pet into the veterinarian if they should develop these symptoms.

People may also contract tularemia developing sudden fever, chills, headaches, diarrhea, joint pain, muscle aches, cough and weakness. 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 members 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 Rachella Thompson, Communicable Disease Investigator, with CUPHD at (217) 531-5361 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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