



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cat Tests Positive for Tularemia

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District Encourages Citizens to be Aware of Local Tularemia Case

Champaign, IL – The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) is encouraging area residents to be aware that a cat in Urbana was recently diagnosed with tularemia. Tularemia is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis* found in animals.

F. tularensis bacteria can be transmitted to humans via the skin when handling infected animal tissue. Infection can also occur when hunting or skinning infected rabbits, and by inhaling dust or aerosols contaminated with *F. tularensis* bacteria. This can occur during farming or landscaping activities, especially when machinery (e.g. tractors or mowers) runs over infected animals or carcasses. People can also become infected by being bitten by ticks carrying tularemia. Human infection can range from asymptomatic illness to life-threatening. Typically, patients with tularemia present with abrupt onset of fever, chills, headache and fatigue following an incubation period of two to 10 days. Additional signs and symptoms may be observed depending on the site of entry. If you develop symptoms of tularemia see your health care provider.

Many animals have also been known to become ill with tularemia including rabbits, muskrats, prairie dogs and other rodents. Domestic cats are very susceptible to tularemia and have been known to transmit the bacteria to humans. Cats may develop a variety of symptoms including high fever, mouth ulcers, depression, enlarged lymph nodes and anorexia.

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

- more -

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 CUPHD

To remove a dead rabbit from your yard, use two plastic trash bags and wear gloves. Keep the rabbit away from your face and carefully pick up the dead rabbit with gloved hands, or shovel if available, and place the body, without swinging it, into the trash bag, then double bag and place in the trash. If you use a shovel, place it in a five-gallon bucket with water using one cup of bleach per gallon of water. Let the shovel sit for a half hour to disinfect. Keep the bucket out of reach from children and pets.

For more information on tularemia, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/tularemia/>.

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