



FACT SHEET **Tularemia**

Tularemia

What is Tularemia?

Tularemia, also known as “rabbit fever,” is a potentially serious illness that occurs naturally in the United States. It is caused by the bacterium, *Francisella tularensis*, found in animals especially rodents, rabbits, and hares. Tularemia is a widespread disease in animals. About 200 human cases are reported in the U.S. each year. Each state, with the exception of Hawaii, has reported cases but it is more commonly found in rural areas of the country.

How do people get tularemia?

People become infected with tularemia several ways:

- By being bitten by an infected tick, deerfly, or other insect
- By handling infected animal carcasses
- By eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- By breathing in the bacteria, *F. tularensis*.

Nearly all cases reported have been caused by the bites of ticks and biting flies, or from handling infected rodents, rabbits or hares.

What are the symptoms of tularemia?

People who have been exposed to the tularemia bacteria should be treated as soon as possible.

Tularemia can be fatal if the person is not treated with the right antibiotics. Symptoms of tularemia could include:

- Sudden fever
- Chills
- Headaches
- Diarrhea
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain
- Dry cough
- Progressive weakness

How is tularemia treated?

Early antibiotic treatment is recommended whenever it is likely a person is exposed to tularemia or has been diagnosed as being infected with tularemia. Health officials will test the bacteria in the early stages of the disease to determine which antibiotics will be most effective.

Who should be notified of a suspected case of tularemia?

Contact the Mid-Michigan District Health Department immediately so an investigation and infection control activities can begin. Your doctor should contact the local health department if they suspect you have been exposed to tularemia. The local health department will contact the Michigan Department of Community Health who will then contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For additional information, go to www.cdc.gov.