



TULAREMIA

(Rabbit fever, Deer-fly fever, Ohara disease, Francis disease)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is tularemia?

Tularemia is a disease caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*. The bacterium lives in many animals, including rabbits, hares, voles, muskrats, and beavers.

Who gets tularemia?

Anyone can become infected. Those people who are most at risk include animal trappers and skimmers, people who handle wild animals, and laboratory technicians. Tularemia is also a potential agent of bioterrorism.

How is tularemia spread?

The organism can be spread directly from animals to humans by activities such as cleaning and skinning. Water or dust can become contaminated from these activities and the bacterium can be acquired by drinking the water or inhaling the dust. Ticks and flies can spread the organism from animals to humans as well. Catching the disease directly from an animal bite is rare but has occurred. Finally, because the organism can survive easily outside of another animal, human, or insect, laboratory accidents can cause infection if live bacteria are handled.

What are the symptoms of tularemia?

Infection by *F. tularensis* causes several different types of tularemia disease syndromes. The syndromes include swollen glands and ulcers, eye infections and sore throats with associated vomiting and diarrhea, pneumonia, and shock. The type of syndrome that develops depends on the subspecies of *F. tularensis* with which a person is infected and where the bacterium enters the body.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

Symptoms can occur from 1 day to 2 weeks after infection. Usually symptoms occur 3 to 5 days after infection.

What are the complications of tularemia?

The progression of the disease varies from person to person. Pneumonia is a potential complication of all syndromes and can be fatal if untreated.

What is the treatment for tularemia?

Tularemia can be treated with antibiotics such as streptomycin and gentamicin, taken for 7 to 14 days. Other antibiotics (e.g., tetracycline) are effective but only if taken for a full 14 days.

How can tularemia be prevented?

Use gloves when skinning or handling rabbits, hares, or other wild animals. Cook the meat of wild rabbits thoroughly. Avoid drinking water or bathing in water that may be contaminated with blood or tissue from animals or their hides. When outdoors in insect-infested areas, take measures to prevent tick and insect bites, such as using protective clothing, nets, and insect repellents.

Where can I get additional information about tularemia?

Contact the Georgia Department of Public Health, Epidemiology Section, at 404-657-2588 or visit CDC's website: <http://www.cdc.gov/Tularemia/> .