

Tularemia

Occupational Bacterial Infection from Handling Rodents

What is Tularemia?

Tularemia, also known as Rabbit Fever, is a rare but potentially fatal disease caused by infection with the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*. It is found worldwide with rodents and rabbits being the main species affected. Domestic animals, such as birds, sheep and domestic animals, such as dogs, cats and hamsters, may also be infected.

How does infection occur?

Infection can be transmitted a variety of ways, including direct contact with a rodent or rabbit that is infected with tularemia or by breathing in the bacteria from the environment. Consuming food or water contaminated by the infected animal can transmit infection. Infection can also be transmitted through a bite from an infected insect (ticks, deer flies).

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms start between 1 to 10 days after exposure. Symptoms can vary based on how a person was infected. Some symptoms include: fever, chills, joint pain, nausea, headaches, sore throat, eyes swelling, skin rash, coughing, and shortness of breath. Lymph nodes may also become swollen and possibly burst.

How do I prevent it?

Prevent infection by keeping pets indoors and not touching wild animals. Wash hands after touching an animal and before you eat. Insect bites can be hard to prevent, but wearing insect repellants, long sleeves and long pants can help lower risk of infection.

How is it treated?

Antibiotics can be used to treat Tularemia.

Resources used:

- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Disease Factsheets: Tularemia
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health Zoonotic Transmission Routes: Tularemia