What is Plague?

Plague is a bacterial disease of rodents that can be spread to humans and other animals by fleas.

TYPES OF PLAGUE
- Bubonic: Infection of lymph glands.
- Septicemic: Infection of blood.
- Pneumonic: Infection of lungs.

TRANSMISSION
- Flea-borne: From infected rodents to humans.
- Direct contact: Handling sick or dead animals, tissues or fluids.
- Respiratory droplets: From Humans or animals with pneumonic plague.

INCUBATION PERIOD
Two to six days after exposure.

SYLVATIC PLAGUE RESERVOIRS
- Wild Rodents: rock and ground squirrels, prairie dogs, other burrowing rodents.
- Domesticates: dogs, cats, etc. Watch for pet cats that develop abscesses, are lethargic or anorexic which may indicate infection. Contact a veterinarian.
- Dogs and Cats with Plague can pass the disease to their owners.

RISK GROUPS
- People in rural areas.
- Biologists, trappers and hunters.
- Campers, hikers and travelers.
- Health care professionals in close contact with pneumonic plague patients.
- Majority of cases occur in NM, AZ, CO

PREVENTION

FLEA CONTROL
1. Treat infested pets using flea collars or flea powder.
2. Vacuuming and cleaning infested premises. Immediately dispose of vacuum cleaner contents / bags
3. Spraying or dusting infested premises with flea powder.
4. Keep pets inside if possible.
5. Outside pets should be on a leash or in fenced yards.

RODENT CONTROL
1. Pre-treat known burrows with insecticide to kill fleas.
2. Follow directions and use extreme caution if using a rodenticide.
3. Dispose of rodents using rubber gloves.
4. Store refuse in rodent proof containers.
5. Store all food items 12-18 inches off the ground in rodent proof containers.
6. Remove all debris in and within 100 feet around the home.
7. Keep animal feeding areas clean.
8. Keep weeds cut.

TREATMENT
- If diagnosed in time, plague is treatable with antibiotics.
- Antibiotics is recommended for a person who is:
  1. Infected during local outbreak.
  2. In a household with a bubonic plague patient.
  3. In close contact with a person or animal with suspected pneumonic plague.

The mortality rate is 50-90% if left untreated, 15% when diagnosed and treated.

The incidence of plague in the United States is very low. One to forty cases are reported annually by western states in 1971-1995. The average is 13 cases.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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Fleas are carriers of plague

Plague in the United States, 1972-1995
- Rat-Mouse: 50%
- Arizonan: 25%
- Other: 25%
- California: 38%

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