



Diseases Fact Sheet - Tularemia

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Tularemia is a bacterial disease associated with both animals and humans. Although many wild and domestic animals have been infected, the rabbit is most often involved in disease outbreaks.

Who gets tularemia?

Hunters or other people who spend a great deal of time out of doors are at a greater risk of exposure to tularemia than people with other occupational or recreational interests.

How is tularemia spread?

Many routes of human exposure to the tularemia germ are known to exist. The common routes include inoculation of the skin or mucous membranes with blood or tissue while handling infected animals, contact with fluids from infected flies or ticks or handling or eating insufficiently cooked rabbit meat. Less common means of spread are drinking contaminated water, inhaling dust from contaminated soil or handling contaminated pelts or other animal products.

What are the symptoms of tularemia?

Tularemia is usually recognized by the presence of a lesion and swollen glands. Ingestion of the organism may produce a throat infection, intestinal pain, diarrhea and vomiting. Inhalation of the organism may produce a fever and a pneumonia-like illness.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally appear between 1-14 days, but usually after 3-5 days.

What is the treatment for tularemia?

Antibiotics to treat tularemia include streptomycin, gentamicin, doxycycline and ciprofloxacin.

What can be done to prevent the spread of tularemia?



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Rubber gloves should be worn when skinning or handling animals, especially rabbits. Wild rabbit and rodent meat should be cooked thoroughly before eating. Avoid bites of flies and ticks, and avoid drinking untreated water.

Additional Information:

Need to remove a tick? Do it the right way!

[Find out how to properly remove a tick.](#)