

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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NEWS RELEASE

Residents should take protective actions because of tularemia outbreak

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health has been advised that an outbreak of tularemia has occurred in _____ (list affected areas). Residents of these areas are encouraged to take protective action to prevent exposure and seek medical attention to prevent exposure and seek medical attention if they have been exposed.

Tularemia is a potentially serious illness that occurs naturally and is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*, which is found in animals (especially rodents, rabbits and hares). It is also known as rabbit fever or deer fly fever.

There are three types of tularemia:

- Ulceroglandular – people can contract this disease from the bite of an infected tick or fly, or when an open wound comes into contact with infected meat.
- Inhalational – this form of the disease occurs by inhaling the bacteria.
- Typhoidal – this is the secondary form of tularemia that develops after a victim has contracted inhalational tularemia.

Tularemia can also be weaponized by someone releasing it into the air where it could remain potent for up to two hours, or by using the bacteria to contaminate food or water.

“We want people who are in the affected areas to take this threat seriously and take precautions to limit exposure to themselves and others,” said _____ (Public Health spokesperson). “We also want those who have been exposed to take measures to prevent serious harm and to seek medical attention immediately if they have symptoms.”

The symptoms for tularemia vary depending on the type of tularemia exposure.

- Ulceroglandular – Symptoms typically appear between 3 to 5 days, but can appear as late as 14 days. Skin ulcers appear on the infection site. Lymph nodes in the area become swollen.
- Inhalational – Symptoms typically appear between 3 and 5 days, but can appear as late as 14 days. Early symptoms are similar to the flu and include sudden fever, chills, coughing, joint pain, weakness and headaches. Later symptoms include inflamed eyes, oral ulcers, severe pneumonia, chest pain and respiratory failure.
- Typhoidal – This form attacks the circulatory system as well as the respiratory system. Other symptoms include fever, extreme exhaustion and weight loss.

All forms of tularemia can be successfully treated with antibiotics including streptomycin, gentamicin or doxycycline. The choice of antibiotics is determined by factors such as the person's age or health.

The department has scheduled a point of dispensing site at _____ (location – city) from _____ (time) to dispense _____ (medication). The _____ (medication) will be designated for the following priority groups:

- Priority group
- Priority group
- Priority group

Stay tuned to your local radio or television stations for more information, developments or changes in the situation. For more information on biological agents, please visit www.cdc.gov.