

NEWS



www.pueblohealthdept.org

101 W. 9th Street, Pueblo, CO 81003

Friday, August 19, 2016

Contact: Ramona Chisman-Ewing

Public Information Officer

(719) 583-4513 phone

Wild Rabbits in Pueblo Testing Positive for Tularemia

Pueblo, CO August, 19, 2016 – Public Health Officials in Pueblo confirmed another wild rabbit has tested positive for tularemia in Pueblo County. This positive rabbit verifies tularemia is throughout the area south of Hwy 50 in Pueblo West, Colorado. All positive confirmed rabbits were reported to have no contact with people.



“Tularemia is naturally occurring in Pueblo County. Residents are advised that tularemia-causing bacteria may always be present in some of the mammals – especially rabbits, rodents and hares and on the ground where these animals may be active,” stated Vicki Carlton, Program Manager in the Environmental Health and Emergency Preparedness Division at the Pueblo City-County Health Department. She added, “Although there are no human cases of tularemia identified in Pueblo so far this year, Colorado has experienced human tularemia cases in people who have been exposed to contaminated soil, drinking contaminated water or inhaling bacteria.”

Public health has been monitoring rabbit die-offs over the past few months and will continue to track tularemia activity throughout Pueblo County. “Because tularemia is known to be in Pueblo County, precautions to prevent tularemia infection should always be taken,” emphasized Ms. Carlton.

Tularemia, “rabbit fever,” is a bacterial infection most commonly transmitted to humans by the handling of sick or dead animals infected with tularemia. Infection can also occur from the bite of infected insects (most commonly ticks and deer flies) as well as exposure to soil and vegetation. Hunters who skin animals without gloves and are exposed to infected blood through an open wound are also at risk.

Typical signs of infection in humans include fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, chest pain, and coughing. Tularemia can be effectively treated with antibiotics; therefore should you have any of these early signs, contact your medical provider.

- more -

PREVENT • PROMOTE • PROTECT

WILD RABBITS IN PUEBLO TESTING POSITIVE FOR TULAREMIA

Dogs and cats also get tularemia by eating infected rabbits or other rodents and through tick and deer fly bites. If your pet shows symptoms of illness including fever, nasal and eye discharge, and skin sores, take it to a veterinarian promptly. Tularemia is easily treated if diagnosed early in dogs and cats.

Recommended precautions include:

- Avoid handling wild animals.
- When outdoors near places where wild rabbits or rodents are present, wear insect repellent containing DEET.
- Use a dust mask when mowing or doing yard work. Do not mow over animal carcasses.
- Leash your pets when outdoors and keep them away from dead animals.
- Routinely use a tick and flea prevention treatment on pets.
- If a dead animal must be moved, avoid direct contact with it. Wear insect repellent to protect yourself from its fleas or ticks, and use a long-handled shovel to scoop it up. Place it in a garbage bag and dispose in an outdoor trash receptacle. Wash your hands with soap and water afterwards.
- Wear proper footwear outdoors where dead animals have been found.
- Do not go barefoot or wear sandals while gardening, mowing or landscaping.
- Wear gloves while gardening or landscaping, and wash your hands after these activities.
- Do not drink unpurified water from streams or lakes or allow your pets to drink surface waters.

If you hunt, trap or skin animals, take additional steps:

- Use impervious gloves when skinning or handling animals, especially rabbits.
- Cook the meat of wild rabbits thoroughly to a temperature of 165°F or higher.

For additional information about tularemia view www.cdc.gov/tularemia.

###