

Francisella tularensis

Tularemia is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*. Tularemia is not known to be contagious. Patient isolation is not required. People who have been exposed to the tularemia bacteria should be treated as soon as possible. The disease can be fatal if not treated with the appropriate antibiotics.

Symptoms

- Symptoms may include sudden fever, chills, headaches, diarrhea, muscle aches, joint pain, dry cough, and/or progressive weakness, pneumonia, chest pain, bloody sputum and difficulty breathing.
- Symptoms can include ulcers on the skin or mouth, swollen and painful lymph glands, swollen and painful eyes, and a sore throat.
- People can get tularemia by handling infected animal carcasses, eating or drinking contaminated food or water or breathing in *F. tularensis*. Symptoms usually appear three to five days after exposure to the bacteria, but can take as long as 14 days.

Risk Assessment

- Direct contact of skin or mucous membranes with infectious materials, accidental parenteral inoculation and ingestion.
- Individuals who are pregnant or have weakened immune systems are at high risk for infection.

Laboratory employees may be exposed to aerosols and infectious droplets if using automated biochemical systems, manual multi-test kits or single biochemical tests for identifications outside of a bio-safety cabinet.

If an employee may have been exposed, seek immediate medical attention.

Treatment: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/tularemia/tularemia-biological-weapon-abstract.asp#4>

References: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/tularemia/facts.asp>

Referred cultures are confirmed by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) laboratories must be reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) by IDPH and by the submitting laboratory.

- Each facility will complete APHIS/CDC Form 4 which is to be sent to CDC within 7 calendar days of the identification of the select agent.
- If an exposure has occurred, the facility must complete APHIS/CDC Form 3. Form 3 must be sent to CDC within 7 calendar days of the identification of the select agent.
- Forms and instructions are available at www.selectagents.gov.

For questions concerning testing or reporting, contact the Illinois Department of Public Health Division of Laboratories.

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IDPH Chicago Laboratory, Clinical Microbiology, 312-793-4760
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