

Tularemia

Tularemia, also known as rabbit or deer-fly fever, has recently gained notoriety as a possible “category A” agent of bioterrorism. Tularemia is caused by *Francisella tularensis*, a hardy organism found in rodents, rabbits, and squirrels; in ticks, flies, and mosquitoes; and in contaminated soil, water, and animal carcasses. Biovar type A is the most common type in North America and is highly virulent; as few as 10–50 organisms can cause disease.

General symptoms of tularemia include fever, malaise, myalgias, headache, chills, rigors, and sore throat. Tularemia has six clinical forms, depending on portal of entry. Ulceroglandular tularemia is the most common form of the disease, accounting for 75–85% of naturally occurring cases. Other clinical forms include: pneumonic (pulmonary symptoms); typhoidal (gastro-intestinal symptoms and sepsis); glandular (regional adenopathy without skin lesion); oculoglandular (painful, purulent conjunctivitis with adenopathy); and oropharyngeal (pharyngitis with adenopathy).

Tularemia occurs throughout the US. People become infected primarily through handling contaminated animals; the bite of infective deer flies, mosquitoes, or ticks; direct contact with or ingestion of contaminated food, water, or soil; or inhalation of infective aerosols. From 1994–2004, 19 cases of tularemia were reported in Oregon. Cases occurred in residents of 12 counties, and were evenly spread across age groups.

Tularemia by Year Oregon, 1995–2004

