



Tularemia

Definition:

Tularemia is a potentially serious illness that is caused by the bacterium *Francisella tularensis*. Tularemia occurs naturally in the United States and is found in animals, especially rodents, rabbits, and hares. *F. tularensis* can be airborne and weaponized and is therefore considered a potential bioterrorism agent.

Signs and symptoms:

Most cases will present with sudden fever, chills, fatigue, myalgia, nausea, and headache. Illness often conforms to one of several syndromes depending on how an individual is exposed. The most common of these syndromes is ulceroglandular. A bioterrorist event would likely manifest as pneumonic.

Transmission:

Typically, transmission occurs through the bite of an infected tick or deer fly, ingestion of contaminated water or food, skin contact with infected animals, including carcasses, or inhalation of airborne bacteria in aerosols or dust. Laboratory infections have been documented. There is no direct person-to-person transmission.

Diagnosis:

Tularemia is diagnosed based on clinical symptoms and laboratory tests.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Educate students and staff about risks associated with insect bites, ingesting contaminated food or water, and handling animals.
- Encourage the use of repellent containing DEET on skin or permethrin on clothing to prevent insect bites.
- Encourage frequent hand washing, especially after contact with animals.
- Encourage cooking food thoroughly and drinking water from a safe source.
- Encourage appropriate use of protective equipment (i.e. rubber gloves) when hunting or in contact with animal blood or secretions.

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should see a provider for testing and treatment.
- Antibiotic treatment is available.

Exclusions

- Children who are sick should remain at home and see a provider if the disease is suspected.

Reporting Requirements

- Tularemia is reportable immediately by phone (1-800-821-5821) upon recognition or strong suspicion of illness.

Resources:

- Federal CDC Tularemia website: <http://www.cdc.gov/Tularemia/>
- EPA insect repellent website: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents>