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NM DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Secretary Catherine Torres, MD

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**New Mexico Department of Health Warns Residents about Tularemia**  
*Two People Confirmed Positive in San Juan County*

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that it has identified two people from San Juan County with laboratory-confirmed tularemia. The cases are in a 19-year-old woman who has recovered and a 33-year-old woman who is hospitalized and is recovering. Both cases were identified in September.

Tularemia is a potentially serious illness in people that occurs naturally in the United States. It is caused by a bacteria found in animals, especially rodents, rabbits and hares. Tularemia can also make dogs and cats sick. Common signs are lethargy, fever, not eating, and sometimes swollen lymph glands.

“I would encourage people in San Juan County and around the state to follow the same precautions they would to avoid plague,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres. “Don’t handle sick or dead rodents, don’t allow pets to roam and hunt, and use a tick and flea product on your pets recommended by your veterinarian. Tularemia can be treated with antibiotics so prompt evaluation by a physician is required as tularemia can be fatal in a small percentage of cases.”

Dr. Paul Ettestad, the Department of Health’s public health veterinarian, said both cases have a history of insect bites on their lower leg.

“Oftentimes there is a rabbit or rodent die off in an area due to tularemia and deer flies or ticks can become infected from these animals and then pass it on to people when they bite them,” said Dr. Ettestad

People can get tularemia in different ways: handling infected animal carcasses; being bitten by an infected tick, deerfly or other insect; eating or drinking contaminated food or water or by breathing in the bacteria. Dogs and cats are usually exposed to tularemia when they are allowed to roam and hunt sick rodents and rabbits or when bitten by an infected tick.

Symptoms of tularemia in people usually develop 3 to 5 days after exposure but can vary from 1 to 14 days; and are similar to plague infection including sudden fever, chills, headaches, diarrhea, muscles aches and joint pain. Other symptoms of tularemia depend on how a person was exposed to the tularemia bacteria and can include pneumonia and chest pain, ulcers on the skin or mouth, swollen and painful lymph glands, swollen and painful eyes, and a sore throat.



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There have been a total of five cases of tularemia in people in New Mexico this year. The other three cases were in a 64-year-old man from Bernalillo County in May, a 17-year-old girl from Santa Fe County in July, and a 54-year-old woman from McKinley County in August. All cases recovered.

For more information go online to [www.nmhealth.org](http://www.nmhealth.org).