



Office of Communications

Public Health News

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For Immediate Release

February 11, 2007

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Environmental Sampling System Detected Tularemia in Los Angeles County

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County and City of Pasadena Health Departments were notified that routine environmental sampling has detected traces of the bacteria that can cause tularemia, an infectious disease, at a testing site in Pasadena, California. The testing is a part of a federal environmental detection system that monitors airborne contaminants.

“It is likely that the positive test was due to a natural source in the environment,” said Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Health Officer for Los Angeles County. “We are conducting further tests, alerting the medical community and monitoring local health care facilities, out of an abundance of caution.”

“Our initial investigation indicates that the positive test was likely due to a natural source in the environment,” said Dr. Takashi Wada, Health Officer for the City of Pasadena. “We are conducting further testing in coordination with Los Angeles County and, as a precaution, have alerted our local medical community to inform them of the situation,” said Dr. Wada.

The Pasadena Health Department and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health have been in communication with local, state and federal authorities on this finding and additional environmental and laboratory test are being conducted.

“Tularemia is typically found in wild animals in California and the traces of the bacteria found in Pasadena were located in a wooded area. At this time, we do not believe that there is any threat to public health and individuals do not need to modify their activities as a result of this occurrence,” said Dr. Fielding.

Tularemia is not contagious and therefore cannot be spread from person to person. It is treatable with antibiotics. Tularemia is extremely rare and there are there have been no human cases of tularemia in Los Angeles County recently. The bacteria that causes tularemia, *Francisella tularensis*, is common in various kinds of ticks and in small and medium-sized mammals such as rabbits, rodents and squirrels. The two main sources of infection for humans are bites by ticks or biting flies, and contact with infected animals or their carcasses, especially the cottontail rabbit.

For more information on tularemia, visit the Los Angeles County Public Health Department website at www.lapublichealth.org, the California Department of Health Services Website at www.dhs.ca.gov.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 3,800 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$650 million.

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