

## ZOONOTIC AND OTHER ANIMAL DISEASES OF CONCERN IN MARYLAND

**Table 1. New or Ongoing Morbidity or Mortality Animal or Zoonotic Disease Events**

| Estimated first onset | Estimated end date | Jurisdiction affected | Species affected | Diagnosis | Estimated # of cases to date | Lead agency | Comment   |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 10/2013               | ongoing            | NW Harford County     | Rabbits          | Tularemia | 4                            | DHMH, DNR   | See below |

**For questions regarding specific disease events, please contact the lead agency noted. This contact information is for use by Maryland veterinarians and health professionals:**

MDA - Maryland Department of Agriculture: [ahops.mda@maryland.gov](mailto:ahops.mda@maryland.gov), 410-841-5810

DHMH - Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases: [dhmh.czvbd@maryland.gov](mailto:dhmh.czvbd@maryland.gov), 410-767-5649

DNR - Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife Health Program, [FWHP@dnr.state.md.us](mailto:FWHP@dnr.state.md.us), 410-226-5193

### **Tularemia**

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have become aware of increased rabbit mortality in a focal area in north western Harford county Maryland. Four rabbits found dead have been diagnosed with tularemia. **We are not aware of any cases of tularemia in people at this time.** However, DHMH wants to remind veterinarians, wildlife rehabilitators, and healthcare providers that tularemia does occur throughout Maryland, and is asking clinicians to consider a diagnosis of tularemia in patients who present with an acute febrile illness following exposure to ticks, sick or dead wildlife, or potentially contaminated aerosols generated from mowing lawns or other outdoor aerosol-generating activities. Hunters, veterinarians, wildlife rehabilitators, and wildlife biologists are at increased risk of exposure to tularemia.

Tularemia is a relatively uncommon bacterial zoonosis caused by *Francisella tularensis*. Sporadic cases of naturally occurring tularemia in humans and wildlife have been documented in Maryland in previous years, and cases are occasionally noted in neighboring states. *F. tularensis* is maintained and amplified in nature in a cycle involving vertebrate hosts (most commonly rabbits and rodents) and arthropod vectors such as ticks. Tularemia is usually transmitted to humans by a tick bite or by touching, field dressing, or eating an undercooked infected animal, but can also be transmitted by contact with contaminated water or soil, by a bite from an infected animal or by inhalation of contaminated particles. Tularemia is not spread directly from person to person.

Tularemia in humans is immediately notifiable to the health department, and we would appreciate hearing of any suspected or confirmed cases of tularemia in wildlife or domestic animals. For a review of tularemia in animals, including a review of the various clinical presentations and treatment and prevention guidance, please see the 2003 Zoonosis Update on tularemia in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association ([https://www.avma.org/News/Journals/Collections/Documents/javma\\_222\\_6\\_725.pdf](https://www.avma.org/News/Journals/Collections/Documents/javma_222_6_725.pdf)). The 2006 USGS National Wildlife Health Center publication discusses tularemia in wildlife (<http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/tularemia/>).

| To report cases of disease in: | Contact:   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Domestic animals</b>        | MDA Animal Health Program Office 410-841-5810<br><a href="http://mda.maryland.gov/animalHealth/Pages/Diseases.aspx">http://mda.maryland.gov/animalHealth/Pages/Diseases.aspx</a>                               |
| <b>Wild animals</b>            | MD DNR / USDA Wildlife Service Call Center 1-877-463-6497<br><a href="http://www.wher.org">http://www.wher.org</a>   |
| <b>Humans</b>                  | DHMH Center for Zoonotic and Vector-borne Diseases 410-767-5649<br><a href="http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OIDEOR/CZVBD/SitePages/Home.aspx">http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OIDEOR/CZVBD/SitePages/Home.aspx</a> |