DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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MANY ANIMALS CAN GET
TULAREMIA, SURVEY SAYS

Tularemia, the disease known as "rabbit fever," is infectious not only to rabbits but, contrary to popular opinion, to a great variety of mammals and some birds, the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of the Interior, reported today.

Even catfish have been involved with carrying tularemia and infecting persons, Survey officials declared. The bacteria has been found in certain streams and it is not known whether the fish actually infected the persons or merely made the wounds through which the organisms entered.

There is a great variation in the intensity of the disease, it was pointed out, and in its ability to infect other animals and man. In some instances it is found that the organism causing tularemia is relatively mild and only slightly infectious.

Tularemia is a plague-like disease transmissible to man. It received its name from the fact that Dr. G. W. McCoy, of the United States Public Health Service, discovered the disease in Tulare County, Calif., in 1910.

Now known to affect people in all parts of the United States, as well as in Canada, Europe, and Asia, the disease has been proved to be identical with the rabbit-borne malady known as Ohara's disease, which affects people in Japan.

Most cases of tularemia in man are contracted from rabbits, it was explained, and this led many hunters and other individuals to believe it to be a "rabbit disease." Jack rabbits and cottontail rabbits are among the best known game animals infected with tularemia.

The disease is carried from animal to animal and to man by the bites of infected deer flies and ticks. Various species of lice also are capable of spreading the infection among animals. Direct infection is common through handling diseased animals.

Precautions against tularemia should be exercised with all animals, the Biological Survey disease experts asserted. Recently an outbreak of this disease was studied among beavers in a northwestern State. In one area many adult beavers died from the disease, although the germs taken from these fur animals were relatively mild for other species.

In man, tularemia is likely to manifest itself first by pain, tenderness, and swelling of lymph glands draining the region where the infection has entered. An inflamed ulcer may develop. This may be accompanied by headaches, pains, chills, prostration, general weakness, and fever.

One attack of tularemia usually confers immunity to man. Though many individuals have died from the disease, most cases in humans are not fatal. They do, however, usually require a long period of recuperation.

Details of the disease, including symptoms and protective measures, are discussed in a Biological Survey mimeographed leaflet, BS-5, entitled "Tularemia, An Animal-Borne Disease," which is available to the public upon request.