

**Benton-Franklin
Health District**
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Kennewick
7102 West Okanogan Place

Pasco
412 West Clark Street

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Benton-Franklin Health
District Website
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Washington Department
of Health
www.doh.wa.gov

Centers for Disease
Control
www.cdc.gov

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HEALTH DISTRICT NOTIFIED OF POSSIBLE CASE OF PLAGUE

Test Results Expected Saturday

April 22, 2016

KENNEWICK — Benton-Franklin Health District was notified today that a local resident was being tested for a possible case of pneumonic plague. Test results are expected tomorrow from the Washington State Department of Health.

At this time, the case has not been confirmed and there is no immediate risk to the general public. Benton-Franklin Health District will issue an update tomorrow once the test results are received. The Health District will continue to investigate the case as it does with all reportable conditions.

Plague occurs naturally in the western United States; the last case in Washington State was in 1984. The plague bacterium (*Yersinia pestis*) is transmitted by fleas and cycles naturally among wild rodents. Plague can also infect humans and their pets. Plague can be treated successfully with antibiotics, but an infected person must be treated promptly. Anyone who has been exposed to the illness can be treated with antibiotics before developing symptoms.

Plague is most often transmitted through bites of infected fleas. It can also be contracted by touching or skinning infected animals (coyotes, squirrels, rats, prairie dogs, and rabbits) or inhaling droplets from the cough of an infected person or animal (especially sick cats). The last reported human-to-human transmission in the US occurred in the 1920s.

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To protect themselves from rodent-borne illnesses such as hantavirus and plague, people should:

- Eliminate nesting places for rodents around homes, sheds, garages, and recreation areas by removing brush, rock piles, trash, and excess firewood.
- Avoid picking up or touching dead animals
- Wear gloves if you must handle sick or dead animals.
- Report sick or dead animals to the local health department.
- Do not let pets sleep in bed with you.
- Use insect repellent that contains DEET to prevent flea bites.

For more information, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/plague/> or <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/EmergencyPreparednessandResponse/Factsheets/PneumonicPlague>.

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