

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Public Information Officer
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Domestic Cat Contracts Plague

Weld County, Colorado – A cat in rural northwest Weld County has tested positive for plague. The cat became sick in early June, is getting treatment and is expected to recover. A person who cares for the cat is also getting preventative antibiotics. "The presence of plague reminds residents to keep fleas off pets and use appropriate flea control products" said Mark E. Wallace, MD, MPH, Executive Director of the Weld County Health Department. "It's good practice to use an insect repellent if you will be working, playing or camping in areas where fleas may be present."

People most commonly contract plague from the bite of an infected flea, but may also get the disease from direct contact with an infected animal. Plague is rare, but is present in wildlife such as rodents and rabbits in Colorado and other western states. People often notice dead animals in areas with plague.

Symptoms of plague include sudden onset of fever, headache, chills, weakness, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. A person may get swollen, painful lymph nodes (called buboes) near the flea bite. Plague is easily treatable with common antibiotics. The earlier a person seeks medical care and receives treatment, the better the chances for a full recovery. If plague goes untreated, severe disease and even death may occur.

To prevent plague and other animal borne diseases:

- Avoid flea bites – stay away from rodents and consider wearing repellent when you are in areas where rodents are present
- Keep fleas off your pets by applying flea control products
- Do not allow cats or dogs that roam and hunt to sleep in your bed as they can carry fleas
- Reduce rodent habitat around your home; remove brush, trim vegetation, and keep the area clear of clutter
- Do not feed or handle wildlife, and if you must dispose of a carcass wear gloves or use a shovel

For questions related to plague or other diseases carried by animals, contact the Environmental Health Division at the Weld County Health Department, (970) 304-6415.

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