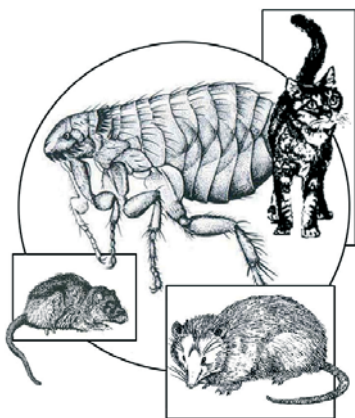


Answers to your questions about

# FLEA-BORNE ILLNESS

## (Murine Typhus)



### WHAT IS MURINE TYPHUS?

Murine typhus is a disease transmitted by fleas. It is caused by the bacterium, *Rickettsia typhi*, found in infected fleas and their feces.

### HOW DO I GET MURINE TYPHUS?

Fleas defecate as they feed. Infection occurs when flea feces containing the bacteria are scratched into the bite site or other skin break.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms may begin from 6 to 14 days after exposure. All infected persons have fever and most have headache, chills, body aches and pains. A rash on the chest, back, arms and/or legs can sometimes occur. Murine typhus shares symptoms with many other diseases and can be incorrectly diagnosed if a specific blood test is not performed. Most of the cases reported require hospitalization, but milder cases may occur.

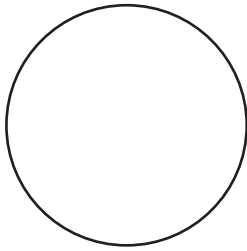
### HOW IS THE DISEASE TREATED?

This disease is readily treatable with the appropriate antibiotic therapy.

### WHAT ANIMALS ARE INVOLVED?

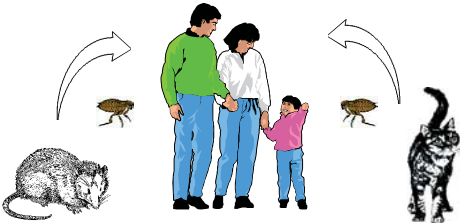
In general, the Norway rat, roof rat, domestic and feral cats, and opossum are involved in the transmission of this disease to humans. These animals frequently come into close contact with people. They become infected and pass the organism to their fleas. Infected animals usually do not display symptoms.





### HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY PET HAS MURINE TYPHUS?

Infected pets usually do not display noticeable symptoms. If these pets are infested with fleas, their fleas may become infected and can transmit the disease to you.



### WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO PREVENT MY PETS AND MYSELF FROM CONTRACTING THE DISEASE?

**Practice safe flea control.** Pets, yards, and homes should be kept free of fleas. Oral and topical flea control medications can be used on pets to control and prevent flea problems. Consult your veterinarian for advice. When purchasing pesticides to treat yards and homes, use only materials which state “fleas” on the label, and follow all label directions carefully.

**Eliminate all possible harborage.** Homes should be kept in good repair to prevent rodents, opossums, and stray or feral cats from entering the structure or nesting in crawl spaces below structures. Yards should be kept clear of heavy undergrowth and accumulated debris to reduce areas where animals may nest or hide.

**Eliminate all food sources.** Do not encourage animals to visit your yard by directly or indirectly feeding them. Open trashcans, bird feeders, fallen fruit, and pet food attract rodents and other animals. Pick up all fallen fruit and do not leave food out for pets.

**Take personal precautions.** When cleaning nesting areas, spray the area with disinfectant, and wear protective equipment such as a particle mask or respirator, goggles, and gloves. This practice also reduces exposure to rodent excretions, which may cause other diseases.

When opossums or feral cats become pests, well-intentioned individuals will sometimes attempt to capture and relocate these animals to other areas. **DO NOT RELOCATE ANIMALS.** This practice violates California Fish and Game laws and is considered inhumane.

Prior to trapping opossums and stray or feral cats on your property, contact the Long Beach Animal Control Program at (562) 570-7387. **DO NOT RELOCATE ANIMALS.** This practice helps spread disease.

### HOW CAN I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

The Vector Control Program at (562) 570-4132 has additional information regarding the management of opossums, rodents, and fleas; free rodent bait can also be obtained by calling this number.