

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Health Reporting an Increase in Flea-Borne Typhus Cases in Los Angeles County

People urged to take precautions to protect themselves and their pets

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is urging people to take precautions following an increase of flea-borne typhus cases across the County. Earlier this year, Public Health investigated a localized outbreak of flea-borne typhus in Central Los Angeles and is currently investigating a second outbreak in the City of Santa Monica.

Flea-borne typhus cases have been rising in Los Angeles County since 2010. In 2024, a record 187 cases were identified. So far in 2025, 106 cases have already been reported, higher than this time last year. Public Health expects additional cases and clusters to appear in the coming months, as flea-borne typhus infections peak in late summer and fall.

"This ongoing increase in flea-borne typhus highlights the importance of taking preventive steps to reduce the risk of infection," said Muntu Davis, MD, MPH, Los Angeles County Health Officer.

What is Flea-Borne Typhus (Typhus)?

Typhus is an acute febrile illness caused by *Rickettsia Typhi* bacteria, which is spread by infected fleas. People can become infected when flea feces are rubbed into cuts or scrapes on the skin or rubbed into the eyes.

In Los Angeles County, infected fleas are most commonly found on rats, free-roaming cats, and opossums. Pets such as dogs and cats that go outdoors can bring fleas into and around your home. Infected animals typically do not show signs of illness. Flea-borne typhus is not spread from person to person.

"Flea-borne typhus is serious, but preventable," said Dr. Davis. "We urge people to take precautions by using flea control on their pets, avoiding contact with stray animals, and preventing wildlife from living in or next to their home or property. If you develop symptoms, such as fever, chills, or a rash, seek medical attention right away."

How to Prevent Flea-Borne Typhus:

Public Health encourages people to follow these preventive steps to the risk of flea-borne typhus infections:

- **Keep fleas off you and your pets.**
 - When outside, use EPA-registered insect repellent labeled for protection against fleas.
 - Routinely use flea control products on your pets.
 - Keep pets indoors as much as possible.

- **Avoid attracting wild or stray animals.**

- Don't leave pet food or water outside.
- Don't feed or touch stray or wild animals.
- Keep your yard free of debris and overgrown plants.
- Store trash in containers with tightly fitting lids.
- Close off crawl spaces and seal any openings where animals could enter, hide, or find food and water.
- Report stray animals or signs of rodents or opossums near your property to local animal control officials.

For more information regarding flea-borne typhus, visit: ph.lacounty.gov/Typhus
