

## History Of Plague

Plague is caused by the same bacteria that caused famous and deadly epidemics in history, such as the Black Death. During those epidemics, millions of people were infected and died because the disease could not be controlled. Although plague still exists today, it is treatable with antibiotics when caught in the early stages.

The World Health Organization reports 1,000-3,000 new cases of plague per year throughout the world. In the United States, human plague is found mostly in rural areas infecting about 10-15 people per year.

## Plague In California

Plague was first found in California in 1900. The last city to have an outbreak was Los Angeles in 1924-1925.

People that live, work, or visit areas where plague is found are at higher risk of catching plague. Plague in California is in the foothills, mountains, and along the coast.



## Control for Plague

The State of California and the County of San Diego Vector Control Program monitor plague. Staff from these programs are trained to watch for sick or dead rodents.

When plague is found in an area, health officials will post warnings.



## Safety Tips

- Avoid known plague areas
- Avoid contact with wild animals, especially sick or dead rodents
- Be careful when handling a sick pet that has been in a plague area
- Avoid face-to-face contact with sick pets or people
- Report sick or dead rodents to the San Diego County Vector Control Program
- Contact your doctor immediately if you have any symptoms within 7 days after being in a plague area

## See More about Plague on Your Smartphone!

Download a QR Reader application from your smartphone then scan the QR code below to learn more about fleas and plague. Go to [www.SDVector.com](http://www.SDVector.com) to learn more about QR codes.



For more information about plague or other vector-borne diseases, contact the County of San Diego Vector Control Program.

County of San Diego



Vector Control Program

5570 Overland Ave., Suite 102  
San Diego, CA 92123  
(858) 694-2888



[www.SDVector.com](http://www.SDVector.com)

# PLAGUE

## Protect Yourself And Your Pets



Photo: CDC



County of San Diego  
Vector Control Program

## Facts About Plague

- Plague is a rare but very contagious disease caused by a bacteria called *Yersenia pestis*
- Plague mostly occurs in rodents
- The disease can be spread to people and other animals through the bite of an infected flea
- People can also get plague if they handle sick or dead animals with plague
- It is possible, though very rare, for plague to spread from person to person
- People that live in, or go to, areas with infected wild rodents have more risk

## Symptoms Of Plague

Human symptoms are usually seen in 2-6 days. Symptoms include chills, fever, headache, muscle aches, weakness and swollen, tender lymph nodes, called "buboes."

There are 3 forms of plague:

- Bubonic plague: Infection of the lymph nodes; this is the most common form
- Pneumonic plague: Infection of the lungs; the only form that can be spread person-to-person
- Septicemic plague: Infection of the blood

Plague can be fatal, but is treatable when found early.

# How Plague is Spread

Plague can be spread between wild animals, fleas, pets and people.

It is important to keep yourself and your pets away from wild animals and their fleas.



Plague can be spread when a person or a pet has direct contact with a wild animal that has plague.

Fleas can carry plague between living and dead wild animals.

They can also give plague to pets or people.



Pets such as cats can get sick with plague and spread it to people.



People with the pneumonic form of plague can pass it to others by coughing on them.

## Do Not Bring Fleas Home!

It is best to leave pets at home.

If pets can not be left at home, use flea control products on them before going to a known plague area. Confine pets or keep them on a leash, so that they can not explore rodent burrows. Animals with plague may become very sick, stop eating and develop a fever. They may have swollen lymph nodes, especially around the neck.

Tell your veterinarian if a pet becomes sick after visiting a plague area. Pets such as cats and rats can also carry plague if they come into contact with plague-carrying fleas. Pets that have plague can pass it directly to people. Pets can also bring infected fleas into the house. This increases the risk of plague for pet owners.



*Ground Squirrel*

The most common wild rodents that can carry plague are ground squirrels, chipmunks, wood rats and mice.