What's Going Around:
A Communicable Disease Report

Reportable diseases and conditions:
- 18 Animal Bites – 12 pediatric, 6 adults; 2 recommended to receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)
- 15 Campylobacteriosis - 3 pediatric, 12 adults
- 1 Carbapenem-Resistant enterobacteriaceae (CRE) - adult
- 2 Carbapenem-Resistant Pseudomonas Aeruginosa (CRPA) - adults
- 211 COVID-19 – 20 pediatric, 191 adults
- 2 Cryptosporidiosis-adults
- 3 Cyclosporiasis – adults
- 2 Malaria (travel associated) - adults
- 2 Salmonellosis – adults
- 1 Shiga Toxin Producing E. coli (STEC) - adult
- 1 Streptococcus pneumoniae, invasive - adult
- 2 Varicella - 1 pediatric, 1 adult
- 2 Vibriosis - 1 pediatric, 1 adult

Additional reports:
- Animals positive for rabies 2023, year to date: 1
- Outbreaks reported—2 hand-foot-mouth disease outbreaks associated with child care facilities.

For a list of reportable diseases and conditions and instructions on how to report, follow this link.

Health News: Plague

- Plague is a bacterial infection caused by the bacterium Yersinia pestis.
- Fleas are the primary vector for plague and become infected by feeding on rodents, such as chipmunks, prairie dogs, ground squirrels, mice, and other mammals that are infected with the bacterium Yersinia pestis. Approximately 85 percent of human plague cases are acquired through the bite of an infected flea. Direct contact with infected carcasses, draining abscesses, or respiratory secretions account for most of the remaining cases. Infected cats with pneumonic plague have also transmitted infection from airborne bacteria contained in infectious respiratory droplets.
- Increased precipitation in the winter or spring months followed by cooler summers may act to promote flea survival and reproduction, leading to increased plague transmission among wildlife and increased exposure to humans and pets.
- People who have had a suspected exposure to plague are instructed by Public Health to monitor themselves under a “fever watch” for one week. If a fever is observed, the individual is asked to seek a visit with their provider and discuss the exposure. Some people with high-risk exposures (eg., exposure to pneumonic plague) will be given antibiotic prophylaxis.
- Since 2018 in El Paso County, six cases of plague have been reported in animals (three squirrels, two prairie dogs, and one domestic cat).
- To date in 2023, there have been no cases reported in animals.
- Pets with pneumonic plague can pose a significant risk to owners, veterinarians and others who handle or come into close contact with these animals, due to possible aerosolization of bacteria. Transmission to humans can also directly occur through bites, scratches, and contact with infectious exudates. It can also indirectly occur when pets carry infected fleas to their owners.
- Felines are highly susceptible to plague and are sometimes implicated in transmission to humans. Dogs infected with plague are less likely to develop clinical illness than cats but still have the potential to become infected and transmit to humans.
- Animals suspected of plague should be taken to their veterinarian to be evaluated.
- Consult with El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) for concerns of plague in humans or animals.

Tips to prevent exposure
- Reduce rodent habitat around your home, workplace, and recreational areas. Remove brush, rock piles, junk, cluttered firewood, and possible rodent food supplies, such as pet and wild animal food. Make your home and outbuildings rodent-proof.
- Wear gloves if you are handling or skinning potentially infected animals to prevent contact between your skin and the plague bacteria. Contact El Paso County Public Health if you have questions about disposal of dead animals.
- Use insect repellent if you think you could be exposed to rodent fleas during activities such as camping, hiking, or working outdoors.
- Keep fleas off of your pets by applying flea control products recommended by your veterinarian. Animals that roam freely are more likely to come in contact with plague infected animals or fleas and could bring them into homes. If your pet becomes sick, seek care from a veterinarian as soon as possible.
- Do not allow dogs or cats that roam free in endemic areas to sleep on your bed.

Figure 1. Animal case count of plague by month and by animal type in the state of Colorado (2005-2021)

Image courtesy of CDPHE