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For Immediate Release

Fleas Test Positive for Plague in Doney Park Area

Flagstaff, Ariz. - Coconino County Public Health Services District (CCPHSD) officials announced today that fleas collected in the Doney Park area, northeast of Flagstaff near Townsend Winona Road and Cosnino Road, have tested positive for plague (*Yersinia pestis*). The tests were conducted at a Northern Arizona University lab.

CCPHSD Environmental Health staff collects and tests flea samples from plague endemic areas throughout the county. The recent tests were conducted as part of the ongoing surveillance in the Doney Park area. Fleas were collected from burrows that were being monitored due to a die off of prairie dogs.

Area residents have been notified of the situation and the burrows have been treated. The area will be closely monitored to determine if further action is required.

This positive test is the first evidence of plague activity reported in Coconino County this year. Although this is the only location in Coconino County where plague has been found this year, the disease may be more widespread. The CCPHSD is urging the public to take precautions to reduce their risk of exposure to this serious disease.

Plague is a disease of rodents and rabbits, and sometimes of the predators that feed upon these animals. The disease can be transmitted to humans and other animals by the bite of an infected flea, or by direct contact with an infected animal. The disease is curable with proper antibiotic therapy if diagnosed and treated early.

Symptoms in humans generally appear within 2-6 days following exposure and include the following: fever, chills, headache, weakness, muscle pain, and swollen lymph glands (called "buboes") in the groin, armpits, or limbs. The disease can become septicemic (spreading throughout the bloodstream) and/or pneumonic (affecting the lungs).

Persons living, working, camping or visiting in areas where plague and/or rodents are known to be present are urged to take the following precautions to reduce their risk of exposure:

1. **DO NOT HANDLE SICK OR DEAD ANIMALS.**
2. **PREVENT PETS FROM ROAMING LOOSE.** Pets can pick up the infected fleas of wild

animals, and then passing on the fleas to their human owners is one of the common ways for humans to contract plague. Cats with plague can also pass the disease on to humans directly thorough respiratory droplets

3. **DE-FLEA PETS ROUTINELY.** Contact your veterinarian for specific recommendations.
4. **AVOID EXPOSURE TO RODENT BURROWS AND FLEAS.**
5. **USE INSECT REPELLENTS** when visiting or working in areas where plague might be active or rodents might be present (Campers, Hikers, Woodcutters, and Hunters).
6. **WEAR RUBBER GLOVES** and other protection when cleaning and skinning wild animals.
7. **DO NOT** camp next to rodent burrows and avoid sleeping directly on the ground.
8. **BE AWARE** cats are highly susceptible to this disease, and while they can get sick from a variety of illnesses, a sick cat (especially one allowed to run at large outside) should receive care by a veterinarian for proper diagnosis and treatment to reduce human exposure to plague.
9. **IN CASE OF ILLNESS (SYMPTOMS PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED), SEE YOUR PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY.**

While colder weather will reduce rodent activity, a sudden reduction in rodent activity, such as prairie dogs and mice, may indicate that plague is present. Persons noticing a sudden reduction of rodent or rabbit activity are urged to contact the CPHSD Environmental Services at 928-679-8750.

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