



APACHE COUNTY

Public Health Services District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 7, 2026

Confirmed Case of Plague Identified in Apache County, Arizona

The Apache County Public Health Services District (ACPHSD) has confirmed a case of plague in a resident of Apache County. The individual has recovered following appropriate medical care. This is the first confirmed case of this disease in Apache County since 2015 and fourth case since 2006. **At this time, the risk to the general public remains low.**

Public health officials are working with partners and the patient to assess environmental risks and ensure appropriate response measures are in place.

What is Plague?

Plague is a rare but serious bacterial infection caused by *Yersinia pestis*. It is most commonly transmitted through the bites of infected fleas that live on rodents such as prairie dogs, squirrels, and rats. In rare cases, it can also spread through direct contact with infected animals.

Plague is a naturally occurring disease in the southwestern United States, including Arizona, where it persists in rodent populations and their associated fleas.

Historical Perspective

Apache County has experienced plague activity in the past, most notably in 2015, when a large-scale rodent die-off—commonly referred to as a “die-off event”—served as an indicator of active plague transmission in the environment. These events are closely monitored by public health and environmental officials, as they can signal increased risk of human exposure.

Symptoms

Symptoms typically appear within 2–6 days after exposure and may include:

- Sudden onset of fever and chills
- Headache and muscle aches
- Fatigue or weakness
- Swollen, painful lymph nodes (commonly called “buboes”)
- In more severe cases, cough, difficulty breathing, or bloodstream infection

Anyone experiencing these symptoms after possible exposure to rodents or fleas should seek medical care promptly.

Treatment

Plague is treatable with antibiotics, especially when identified early. Prompt medical care significantly improves outcomes. Healthcare providers in the region are aware of this case and are prepared to evaluate and treat patients if needed.

Prevention Tips

Residents can reduce their risk by taking the following precautions:

- Avoid contact with wild rodents and their burrows
- Use insect repellent when outdoors
- Keep pets free of fleas and avoid allowing them to roam or hunt rodents
- Do not handle sick or dead animals
- Keep yards clean and free of debris that may attract rodents

Public Health Response

ACPHSD is conducting appropriate follow-up, including environmental assessment and public education, to reduce the risk of additional cases. There is no indication of widespread risk at this time.

While human cases remain rare, this historical occurrence highlights the importance of continued surveillance, public awareness, and preventive measures to reduce the risk of transmission in rural and wildlife-interfacing areas of Apache County.

Contact Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/plague/about/>
- Apache County Public Health Services District 928-333-6432
- <https://www.facebook.com/ApacheCountyPublicHealth>
- <https://www.apachecountyaz.gov/Public-Health-Services>

