

ANIMAL HEALTH ALERT

Veterinary Public Health | (213) 288-7060 | vet@ph.lacounty.gov | <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>



Animal Health Advisory: Increasing cases of flea-borne typhus in people in Los Angeles County 9.3.2025

Key Points:

- Cases of flea-borne typhus (FBT) in humans in Los Angeles (LA) County have increased significantly in recent years.
- In 2025, clusters of FBT human cases have occurred in Central Los Angeles and Santa Monica.
- We are requesting assistance from veterinarians and animal health facilities in educating the public both about flea-borne typhus, and crucial steps to counteract fleas on pets in the community.

Dear Animal Health Colleagues:

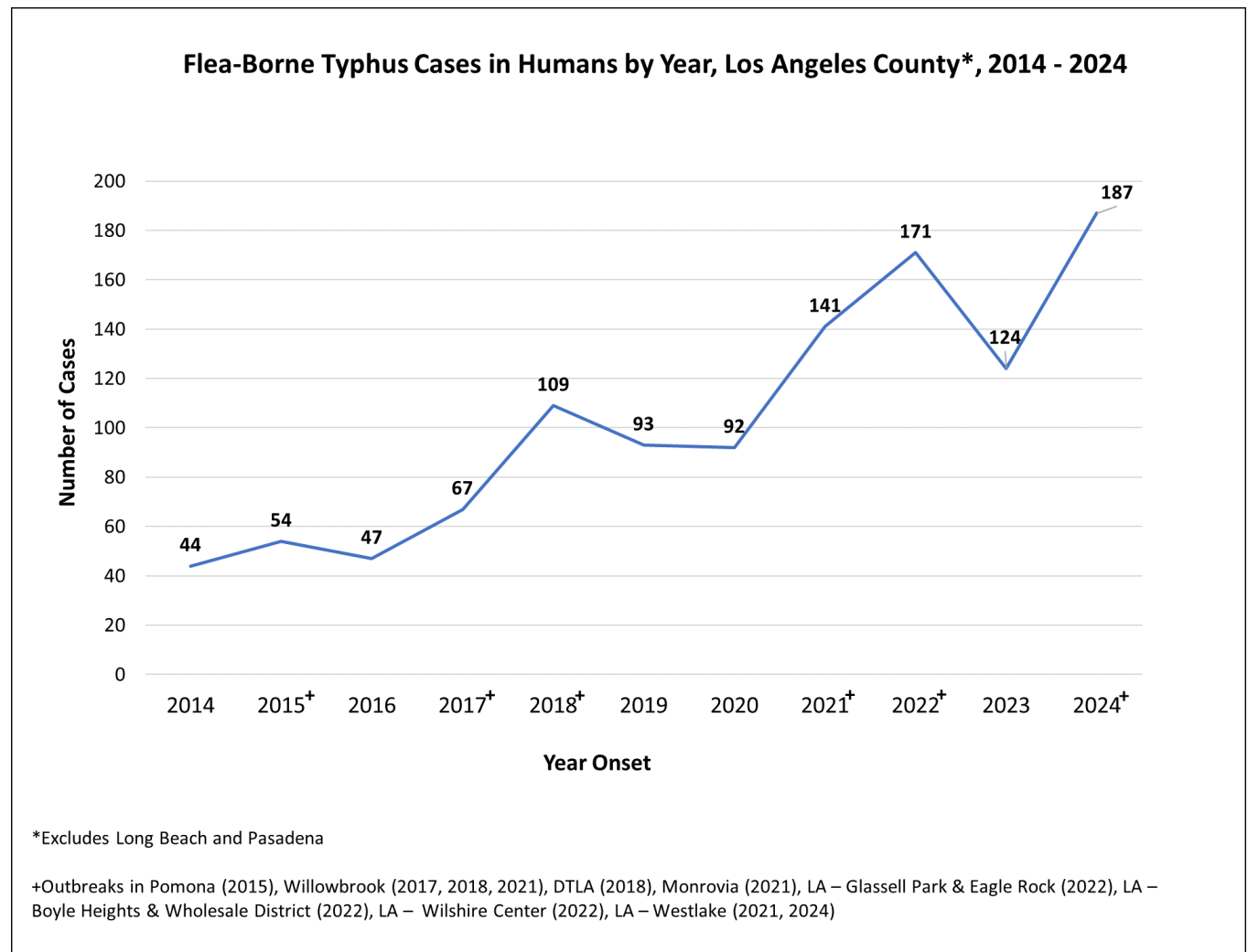
In the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of flea-borne typhus (FBT) cases reported in people in LA County (see graph below). Although FBT often causes mild disease, reported cases tend to be more severe. Over the last 10 years, 86% of reported cases in LA County have required hospitalization.

In 2025, clusters of cases have been detected in Central LA and Santa Monica. The LA County Department of Public Health recently sent out a [press release](#) and an [alert to human healthcare providers in LA County](#) as a result. Since animal health workers play such a crucial role in controlling fleas on pets and in educating the community, we are requesting your assistance as well.

What is flea-borne typhus (FBT)?

FBT is an illness caused by the bacteria *Rickettsia typhi*. In the United States, cases occur in Texas, Hawaii, and southern California. People usually get infected after scratching a bite from an infected flea, or by introducing flea feces into the bite wound. The incubation period for FBT in a person is about 1-2 weeks. Common clinical signs in a person may include fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, and rash on or around the chest, sides, and back. Rash does not appear in all cases. Anyone who might have FBT is strongly advised to consult a healthcare provider, who can test for exposure to *Rickettsia typhi* and can provide treatment.

People are more likely to be exposed to FBT when spending time near flea-infested animals. Therefore, flea control is a central part of prevention of this disease. FBT is not known to cause illness in any animals.



Los Angeles County animal health facilities are requested to:

- 1) **Educate pet owners and the community about flea-borne typhus (FBT)**
 - Please post this information in your waiting room and share online.
 - Flea-borne Typhus Flyer – [English](#), [Spanish](#)
 - Flea-borne Typhus Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – [English](#), [Spanish](#)
- 2) **Advise pet owners of the importance of year-round flea control**
 - Prescribe or recommend flea control products for use on pets.
 - Keep cats indoors to reduce their likelihood of picking up infected fleas.
- 2) **Teach pet owners about the importance of environmental clean-up and treatment**
 - Remove yard debris, pick up fallen fruit, keep all trash containers sealed, and trim vegetation to reduce food and harborage areas for rats and other wildlife.

- Remove flea eggs from flea-infested indoor environments by frequent laundering of pet bedding and vacuuming.
 - Consider using chemical products designed to treat flea infestations indoors or outdoors. Be safe! Read product labels very carefully and follow exactly as directed, including keeping pets and children away from treated areas until dry (or as directed). Consider consulting an expert or calling an exterminator for flea infestations that are difficult to eliminate.
- 3) **Advise residents not to feed wildlife and stray animals.**
- Leaving food out can attract a variety of wildlife and stray cats which can serve as hosts for increasing flea populations. This can lead to a buildup of flea eggs in the environment.
 - Feeding wild carnivores is illegal in many communities.

Sincerely,

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