



## WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

### NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### *Williamson County and Cities Health District Urges Residents to Take Precautions against Flea-borne Illness*

June 12, 2009 (Williamson County) –

Recent cases of murine typhus in Williamson and Travis Counties have prompted the Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) to urge residents to take precautions against the flea-borne illness.

Murine typhus is a disease spread by fleas living on rodents (rats, mice), other small animals including cats and dogs, and wildlife. People get the disease through the bites of infected fleas. Murine typhus is not spread from person to person. The most common symptoms of murine typhus are high fevers, severe headaches, body aches and a rash. Some cases can experience more severe symptoms requiring hospitalization. The disease is rarely fatal.

WCCHD is currently investigating 3 probable cases of murine typhus from the Georgetown and Cedar Park areas. Typhus cases have also been reported in Travis County this year ([http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/epi\\_typhus\\_update.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/epi_typhus_update.htm)).

Steps you can take now to protect yourself and your family from murine typhus include:

- Clean your yard so that rodents and other animals cannot live there.
- Remove any brush or trash, keep the grass mowed, and keep firewood off the ground.
- Do not leave pet food out at night as this attracts other animals.
- Prevent rodents and other wildlife from living in your house. If rodents or wildlife nest either inside or out, consult with a pest control company or your local animal control department on how best to safely remove the animals.
- Treat for fleas before you begin rodent control in your house or yard. Otherwise, when the rodents die, the fleas will search for new hosts, possibly you and your family. There are several commercial flea control products on the market. Pick one and follow the label instructions.
- If you own pets, control the fleas on them regularly. If they come in contact with infected fleas, they could bring them home to you. Ask a veterinarian about flea control products that are safe to use on your pets.
- Avoid areas that may be infested with fleas. Use insect repellants containing DEET if your activity could expose you to fleas.
- Avoid interaction with feral animals and wildlife.

For more information on typhus or the Williamson County and Cities Health District, *your public health department*, visit [www.wcchd.org](http://www.wcchd.org).