



# NAVAJO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

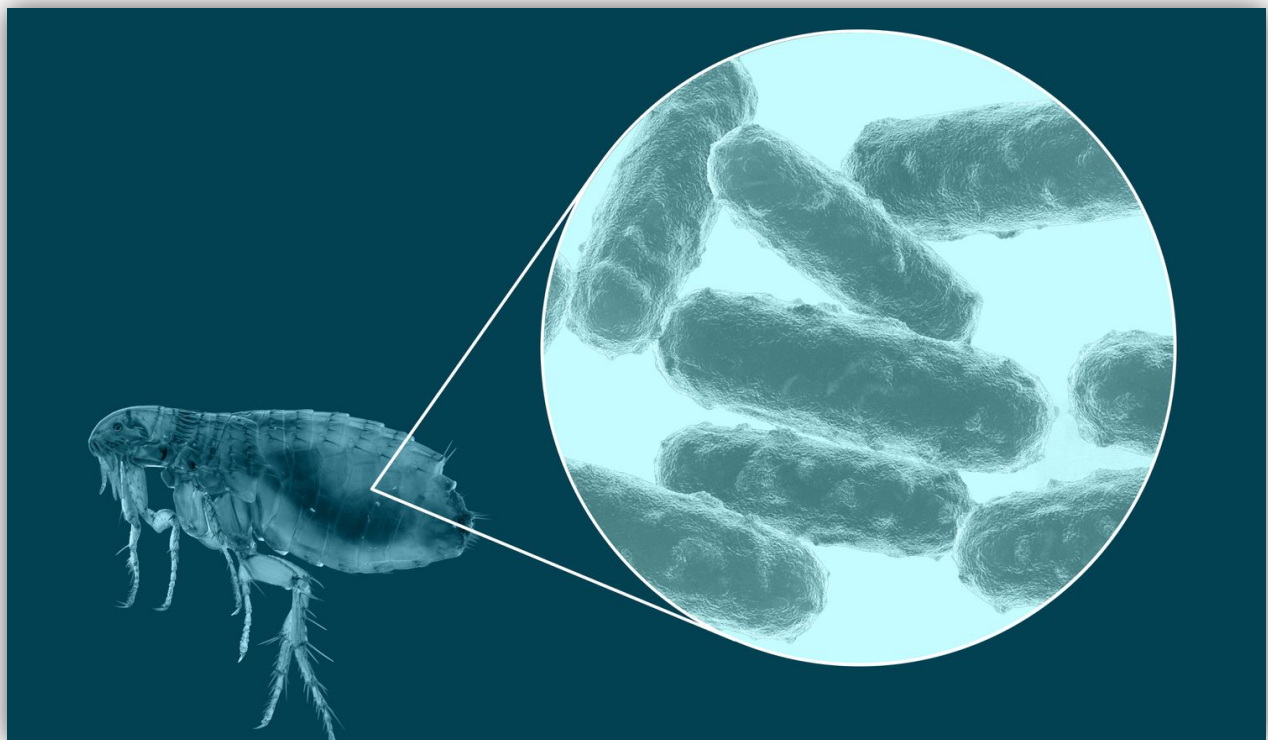
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## Navajo Department of Health Issues Public Health Advisory Notice (PHAN) for Confirmed Plague Case in Apache County



**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The Navajo Department of Health (NDOH), in coordination with the Diné Bikéyah Public Health Team, has confirmed a case of plague in Apache County within the Navajo Nation. The individual has fully recovered following appropriate medical treatment. This marks the first confirmed plague case in Apache County since 2015 and the fourth reported case since 2006. At this time, public health officials indicate the risk to the public remains low.

The Diné Bikéyah Public Health Team is working closely with local, state, and federal partners to conduct environmental assessments, identify potential exposure risks, and ensure appropriate prevention and response measures are implemented to protect community members.

“While plague is rare, we remain vigilant in protecting the health and safety of the Navajo Nation,” said **NDOH Executive Director Sherylene Yazzie**. “Through strong partnerships and proactive public health response, we are working to ensure families have the information they need to reduce risk and protect themselves. Our priority is keeping our tribal communities safe through awareness, prevention, and early treatment.”

### **WHAT IS PLAGUE?**

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

Plague occurs naturally in parts of the southwestern United States, including Arizona, where the bacteria circulates among wild rodent populations and their fleas.

### **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 as soon as possible.

### **TREATMENT:**

Plague is treatable with antibiotics, especially when identified early. Quick medical care significantly improves outcomes, so seek immediate medical attention at your nearest health care clinic or IHS hospital.

### **PREVENTION TIPS:**

Individuals 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

### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

- Navajo Department of Health @ (928) 357-6757
- Navajo Epidemiology Center @ (928) 871-6539
- Apache County Public Health Services District @ (928) 333-6432
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention @ <https://www.cdc.gov/plague/about/>

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