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**Subject** PRO/AH/EDR> Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (SD)

**HANTAVIRUS** PULMONARY SYNDROME - USA (SOUTH DAKOTA)  
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Date: Mon 13 Jan 2003

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Seventh case of **hantavirus** pulmonary syndrome in South Dakota

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**Hantavirus** [pulmonary syndrome], a viral disease spread by mice that can be fatal in up to a third of all cases, has been reported in Huron, said Dr Janice McKenney, a physician at Huron Clinic. The disease was detected in a healthy young man in his 20s who lives in Beadle County, McKenney said. The man is now recovering well.

**Hantavirus** pulmonary syndrome (HPS) has been recognized as a disease only recently in North America. So far, it's fairly uncommon, and the chances of becoming infected are low. However, HPS is potentially deadly and immediate intensive care is essential once symptoms appear, "The problem is that it [progresses] so quickly," McKenney said. "Within 12 hours, a person who looks like he just has the flu is practically at death's door."

Lon Kightlinger, a state epidemiologist with the South Dakota Department of Health, said this is the seventh case reported in South Dakota since the disease was identified during an outbreak in 1993 in the Four Corners area of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The last case in South Dakota was reported in 2000, and of the 7 total reported cases, there were some fatalities, he said. "**Hantavirus** is what's called an emerging disease; it's only been in the last 10 years or so that it's been discovered in New Mexico and Arizona, specifically," Kightlinger said. "Now it's in 31 states, and as far east as Rhode Island. Nebraska just had their first case this year. "This is something we need to be watchful of, and if you have risk factors just be aware of it," he said. "Exposure is as simple as having mice and rats around, especially this time of year, when they're moving indoors and looking for food."

**Hantavirus** is spread through contact with fecal droppings or urine of infected rodents, particularly the deer mouse and white-footed mouse; both are field mice that can be found in South Dakota. Ordinary house mice are not carriers of **hantavirus**, but if food is scarce or temperatures bitter cold, field mice can seek shelter in homes, sheds, or barns. The first symptoms of sickness, fever, and muscle aches can appear from one to 5 weeks after exposure, followed by shortness of breath and coughing. Once this phase begins, the disease progresses rapidly, often requiring hospitalization within 24 hours. "Lots of people think it's flu, and then it's something more serious," he said. "Everybody is susceptible. This is a new disease and we don't know a lot about it. It's being studied."

Kightlinger said the state health department wrote to Huron area physicians Thursday to tell them that the disease has been diagnosed here. The virus lives only a couple of days in the fecal matter or urine, but if people do have a problem with mice in their homes or in buildings on their property, they should take precautions to minimize their contact with the rodents. McKenney said if there are mouse droppings in or around the home, people should douse the area with a mixture of a gallon of water mixed with a cup and a half of bleach. "Vacuuming is unsafe because it blows the air out into the room," she stressed. Once the droppings have soaked in the bleach solution for at least 15 minutes, wear rubber gloves to clean the area up.

"The person with **hantavirus** here had not traveled; he had no risk factors," McKenney said. "He probably caught it from a mouse in his own home. He's out of danger now, but he was very, very sick."

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[see also:

**Hantavirus** pulmonary syndrome - USA (Arizona) [20030109.0071](#)  
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