



Office of the Director

1740 W. Adams Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007-2670
(602) 542-1025
(602) 542-1062 FAX

JANE DEE HULL, GOVERNOR
CATHERINE R. EDEN, DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Michael Murphy, ADHS Public Information: (602) 542-1001 pager: 591-5581
Craig Levy, ADHS Vector-Borne & Zoonotic Disease Section: (602) 230-5932

**Hantavirus Death Confirmed in Northeastern
Arizona**

The Arizona Department of Health Services today urged the public to take appropriate precautions when living or working in rodent infested areas, following confirmation of a fatal case of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) in northern Arizona.

A case of the disease was confirmed on Tuesday in a teenage Navajo County resident. The diagnosis was confirmed through testing at the Arizona State Health Laboratory.

"Health officials in the area are conducting an investigation to identify the circumstances and the potential source of disease exposure," said Craig Levy, manager of the ADHS Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Disease Section.

This is the first confirmed case of HPS in Arizona this year. To date, 33 cases of HPS have been reported in Arizona since 1992. Nine cases were fatal. Four cases were reported in Arizona last year.

HPS is an often deadly disease that usually begins with flu-like symptoms, and may rapidly progress to respiratory failure when the lungs fill with fluid. Patients usually develop breathing difficulty approximately two to six days after onset of symptoms. Hantavirus is spread by the deer mouse and other closely-related species of wild mice, which excrete the virus in their urine, droppings and saliva. People can become infected by inhaling particles of the virus which may become airborne when rodent droppings or nests are disturbed. The virus is not spread from person to person.

Nationwide, there have been more than 280 cases of HPS reported in 31 states since the virus was first recognized. Of these, 38 percent were fatal. The disease was first recognized during a 1993 outbreak that occurred in the Four Corners area, affecting 53 people in Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado.

Hantavirus can occur wherever the deer mouse and its close relatives live, which includes most rural areas throughout the state. Levy stressed the importance of taking preventive measures to avoid contracting the disease. "The best defense against infection with hantavirus is to avoid all contact with rodents, their nests and droppings," he said. "If you do have to clean up droppings or nests, be sure to thoroughly disinfect the area first. Be especially cautious when entering a structure, such as a summer cabin, that has been closed up. People who have been exposed to rodent droppings and who become ill with HPS-like symptoms should seek medical care."

ADHS is issuing the following guidelines to reduce risk of contracting Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome:

Proper clean-up methods:

– When rodent droppings or nests are found in and around the home, spray them liberally with a household

disinfectant and allow them to soak for at least 15 minutes. Use disinfectants that kill viruses, such as Lysol®, or a solution of one-part household bleach mixed with nine parts water.

- After disinfecting, wear rubber gloves and clean up the droppings with disposable materials such as paper towels, rags or mops.
- Seal all materials, droppings or nests in double plastic bags and dispose of them in the trash.
- Do not clean the droppings or nests by sweeping, brushing or vacuuming, since these methods stir up dust and increase a person's chances of inhaling the virus.

Rodent-proof your home:

- Prevent rodents from entering the home by plugging or sealing all holes and gaps to the outside greater than 1/4-inch in diameter. Use steel wool, thick wire screen, metal flashing or cement to seal holes.
- Eliminate or reduce rodent shelter around the home by removing outdoor junk and clutter, and by moving woodpiles, lumber, hay bales etc., as far away from the house as possible.
- Keep the lawn trimmed and free of excess weeds and brush.
- Do not make food easily available to rodents. Do not leave pet food in dishes. Dispose of garbage in trash cans with tight-fitting lids.
- Wash dirty dishes promptly, and clean up spilled food immediately. Store bulk grains and animal feed in rodent-proof containers.

Rodent control:

- Control rodents inside the home by placing spring-loaded "snap" traps in areas where rodents and their droppings have been observed. Bait the traps with peanut butter and/or oats and check them regularly. When rodents are caught, spray the dead rodents with a disinfectant, such as Lysol® or bleach and water, then wait at least 15 minutes. Put on rubber gloves and then seal the dead rodents in plastic bags before disposing of them in a trash can. The snap traps can be disinfected and re-used.
- In areas above 4,500 feet in elevation, any dead rodents and rodent nests should be sprayed with a pesticide to kill fleas before disinfecting or disposing of the carcasses. This is to prevent flea bites and possible exposure to another disease, the plague.

For more information about HPS, contact the ADHS Vector-Borne & Zoonotic Disease Section at (602)230-5932.

~Leadership for a Healthy Arizona~