

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Catherine Torres, M.D.

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Department of Health Announces Fatal Hantavirus Case in Torrance County Resident
Case is Second in New Mexico This Year

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Health Department announced today that a 35-year-old man from Torrance County has died from Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome. This is the second case of Hantavirus in New Mexico this year. The first case in January, 2011 was in a 51-year-old woman from McKinley County and was also fatal.

“We extend our sympathy to his family and friends,” said Cabinet Secretary Dr. Catherine Torres. “Hantavirus can be a serious and sometimes deadly disease, so I am advising all New Mexicans to follow our prevention guidelines to keep themselves and their families safe. I also urge health-care workers and the general public to familiarize themselves with the symptoms of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome.”

Early symptoms of Hantavirus infection are fever and muscle aches, possibly with chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and cough which progresses to respiratory distress. These symptoms develop within one to six weeks after rodent exposure. Although there is no specific treatment for Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, chances for recovery are better if medical attention is sought early.

“The best defense against being infected with Hantavirus is to avoid disturbing areas of rodent infestation, including nests and droppings,” said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the department’s state public health veterinarian. “As warmer weather occurs, people should air out their cabins and sheds before entering them for the first time.”

People can become infected and develop disease from Hantavirus when they breathe in aerosolized virus particles that have been transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings or saliva. The deer mouse is the main reservoir for the strain of Hantavirus that occurs in New Mexico, Sin Nombre virus.

To protect yourself, avoid contact with mice and other rodents. Other important steps are:

- Air out closed up buildings before entering.
- Seal up homes and cabins so mice can’t enter.
- Trap mice until they are all gone.
- Clean up nests and droppings using a disinfectant.
- Put hay, wood, and compost piles as far as possible from your home.

- Get rid of trash and junk piles.
- Don't leave your pet's food and water where mice can get to it.

In 2010, there were two cases, both from McKinley County and both recovered. In 2009, New Mexico had four cases of Hantavirus, none fatal, from Santa Fe, Taos, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba counties. In 2008, New Mexico had two cases of Hantavirus, both fatal, from Taos and Otero counties.

For more information about Hantavirus, check out the Department's website:

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/ERD/HealthData/hantavirus.shtml>.

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