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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Department of Health Announces Hantavirus Case in McKinley County Resident
Fifth Case in New Mexico This Year

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Department of Health is announcing today that a 59-year-old woman from McKinley County is hospitalized at University Hospital in critical condition with laboratory-confirmed Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). This is the fifth case of HPS in New Mexico this year.

“While cases of Hantavirus are uncommon, the five cases we have had this year serve as a reminder of the importance in following our prevention guidelines to keep all New Mexicans safe and reduce their risk of being exposed to infected mice,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres.

People can become infected and develop disease from HPS 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.

“Being aware of your surroundings so that you avoid disturbing areas of rodent infestation, rodent nests and droppings is very important along with making sure your house is sealed up so that rodents cannot enter,” said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the Department’s state public health veterinarian.

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

Early symptoms of Hantavirus infection include 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



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is no specific treatment for Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, chances for recovery are better if medical attention is sought early.

This year there has been three fatal cases of HPS: a 51-year-old woman from McKinley County reported in January, a 35-year-old man from Torrance County reported in May, and a 23-year-old man from McKinley County reported in July. Also in 2011 there a 39-year-old man from McKinley County reported in May who recovered from HPS. In 2010, there were two non-fatal cases of HPS, both from McKinley County. 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, visit the Department's website:
<http://www.health.state.nm.us/ERD/HealthData/hantavirus.shtml>.

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