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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Dept. of Health Announces First Hantavirus Case Diagnosed This Year *Case is McKinley County Man Hospitalized in Albuquerque*

(Las Cruces) -- The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that a 51-year-old man from McKinley County is hospitalized at UNM Hospital in Albuquerque with the State's first diagnosed case of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome this year. An environmental investigation will be conducted to determine where the man may have been exposed to the virus.

"All New Mexicans should be aware of this disease and take precautions to avoid rodents and their droppings," said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the Department of Health's public health veterinarian. "This is especially important at this time of year when the cold weather is causing rodents to seek shelter and food in homes and other buildings. The best defense against Hantavirus is to seal up your house so mice can't enter and avoid disturbing areas of rodent infestation, including nests and droppings."

Hantavirus is a deadly disease transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings or saliva. People can contract the disease when they breathe in aerosolized virus. The deer mouse is the main reservoir for Hantavirus in New Mexico. The Department of Health urges health-care workers and the general public to familiarize themselves with the symptoms of Hantavirus.

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

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.

While this case was diagnosed in 2011, the man became sick with the diseases in December 2010. There was one case of Hantavirus in May 2010 in a McKinley County woman who recovered. In 2009 there were four cases of Hantavirus from Santa Fe, Taos, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba counties. None of the 2009 cases were fatal. In 2008, New Mexico had two cases of Hantavirus, both fatal, from Taos and Otero counties.

For more information about Hantavirus go online to <http://www.health.state.nm.us/ERD/HealthData/hantavirus.shtml>.

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