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NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Department of Health Announces Second Hantavirus Case Diagnosed This Year
Case is McKinley County Woman

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

"Cases of Hantavirus in the winter are not as common as in spring and summer and are usually due to rodents seeking shelter and food in homes and other buildings due to the cold weather," said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the Department of Health's public health veterinarian. "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."

People can become infected and develop disease from Hantaviruses 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. 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.

In 2010, there was one case in a McKinley County woman who 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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