

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

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New Mexico Dept. of Health Announces Hantavirus Case in McKinley County Resident
Case is Third in New Mexico This Year

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Health Department announced today that a 39-year-old man from McKinley County is hospitalized at University Hospital in Albuquerque in critical condition with laboratory-confirmed Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome.

This is the third case of Hantavirus in New Mexico this year. The two previous cases are a 51-year-old woman from McKinley County reported in January and a 35-year-old man from Torrance County reported in May. Both cases were fatal.

“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, especially starting this holiday weekend when we enjoy our state’s beautiful outdoors,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres. “Cases of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome usually increase during the warmer spring and summer months when rodent activity increases and human activity that can put people in contact with rodents,”

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.

“Most exposures to Hantavirus occur in or around people’s homes, especially when cleaning out enclosed areas that have lots of mouse droppings,” said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the department’s public health veterinarian. “Exposures also occasionally occur while people are out camping, so it is important to avoid rodents and their droppings while recreating outdoors also. Avoid bringing food inside your tent or sleeping area so mice aren’t attracted and come inside. Avoid disturbing areas of rodent infestation, including nests and droppings.”

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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