



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mice in rural areas test positive for hantavirus

LAS VEGAS – June 26, 2006 – The Southern Nevada Health District has identified hantavirus in mice near the Cold Creek area in Clark County. The Cold Creek area is approximately 25 miles north of Lee Canyon Road near Mt. Charleston. The health district routinely conducts hantavirus surveillance in rodents and has historically found this disease in rural areas of Clark County. No rodents have tested positive in the Las Vegas valley.

The health district is sending notification letters to residents in the Cold Creek area, including packets with information on prevention, transmission and a rodent proofing checklist. A total of 33 rodents were sampled near Cold Creek's Wheeler Pass cut-off road. Eleven of the samples were reported positive to the health district by the testing laboratory at the University of New Mexico. The positive samples were from three cactus mice and eight deer mice.

Hantavirus is a viral disease carried by several rodent species and is transmitted through inhalation of infected rodent fecal matter and urine particles. Person-to-person spread of the illness is unlikely. Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) is a rare, but often fatal illness.

The public is advised to avoid contact with any rodent species and to follow general precautions to prevent mice from living around homes, sheds and other enclosed areas.

General Precautions

- Reduce the availability of food sources and nesting sites inside your home.
- Keep food (including pet food) and water covered and stored in rodent-proof metal or thick plastic containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Store garbage in rodent-proof metal or thick plastic containers with tight-fitting lids.
- Dispose of trash and clutter.
- Prevent rodents from entering the home by sealing all openings that are greater than a ¼ inch.

Clean-up Procedures

Any area where you see rodent activity such as dead rodents or rodent droppings (feces) and urine should be thoroughly cleaned.

- Use wet mopping or wet cleaning methods to carefully remove rodent droppings and urine from occupied buildings.

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- Avoid creating dust or aerosol from rodent droppings and urine.
- Wet with disinfectant before cleaning.
- Do not use a vacuum cleaner or a broom that will create airborne particles and dust.
- Wear rubber gloves, long-sleeved clothing, and a dust mask.
- Always wash hands with soap and warm water afterward.
- 3 measuring tablespoons of household chlorine bleach per gallon of water can be used as a disinfectant.
- Use Lysol or other cleaning solutions that say disinfectant on the label and have phenol on the list of ingredients.
- Apply the disinfectant to the mouse droppings and urine and all areas where rodents have been at least 30 minutes before cleanup to allow disinfectant to work.
- If droppings have been treated properly with a sanitizer, they can be double bagged and disposed in the regular trash bin.
- Do not touch dead rodents.
- Wet dead rodents and rodent nests with disinfectant, allowing at least 30 minutes for disinfectant to work before removing.
- Dispose of rodent bodies by either picking them up with a tool and placing in a double plastic bag which is then sealed or placing hand into a double plastic bag, picking up rodents, then reversing the bag back over the rodents and sealing.
- Dispose of by burial or in the trash.
- Wash gloved hands in a general household disinfectant and then in soap and water.
- Wash bare hands after removing gloves.

Guidance for hikers and campers

- Stay away from rodents and rodent burrows or dens such as pack rat nests.
- Do not use cabins or other enclosed shelters that have rodents or rodent droppings and urine until they have been properly cleaned and disinfected.
- Do not pitch tents or place sleeping bags where there are rodent droppings or burrows.
- Do not camp near places where rodents may find shelter such as garbage dumps or wood piles.
- If possible, do not sleep on the bare ground.
- Use a cot with the sleeping surface at least 12 inches above the ground.
- Use tents with floors.
- Keep food in rodent-proof containers.
- Promptly bury all garbage and trash, or discard in covered trash containers.
- Use only bottled water or water that has been disinfected by filtration, boiling, chlorination, or iodination for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, and brushing teeth.

For more information about HPS and prevention tips access the health district website at www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

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