



Health Department

RALPH CLEGG
Executive Director

ERIC EDWARDS
Deputy Director

MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT

Aislynn Tolman-Hill
Utah County Health Department
Phone/Mobile: 385-204-4627
AislynnT@utahcounty.gov

Hantavirus-Related Death Reported in Utah County

Public Urged to “Seal Up, Trap Up and Clean Up” to Prevent Hantavirus

PROVO, UT – Utah County Health Department (UCHD) officials are investigating the death of a female Utah County resident related to hantavirus. The female was between the ages of 18 – 44, from Utah County, and had no other apparent health issues. This is the second death related to hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) in the state in 2016, and tenth case since 2006.

Hantavirus infection is a virus transmitted by infected rodents through fresh urine, droppings or saliva. The main way the virus is spread to people is when they breathe in the air contaminated with the virus. Other transmissions can include an infected rodent biting a person, touching objects or eating food contaminated with rodent urine, droppings, or saliva from an infected rodent.

“Anyone who comes into contact with rodents that carry the virus is at risk,” says Ralph Clegg, UCHD Executive Director. “People need to be taking precautions when working in areas with potential rodent droppings and nests. Use a disinfectant spray on areas with droppings and wait 15-20 minutes before cleaning. This will kill the virus and decrease your risk.” Potential risk activities include: opening and cleaning previously unused buildings, housecleaning activities, work-related exposure, camping and hiking.

Early symptoms of hantavirus infection include fatigue, fever and muscle aches, especially in the large muscle groups. Headaches, dizziness, chill and abdominal problems may also be present. Four to ten days after the first phase of illness, a sick person will experience coughing and shortness of breath as the lungs fill with fluid.

HPS is fatal in over one third of cases reported. However, patients who fully recover from the disease do not experience lasting effects or complications. Individuals experiencing early symptoms such as fatigue, fever, muscle aches and have a history of rodent exposure with shortness of breath should contact their healthcare provider immediately.

To prevent hantavirus “Seal Up, Trap Up and Clean Up” by following these important steps:

- Air out closed-up buildings before entering
- Trap mice until they are all gone
- Clean up nests and droppings using a disinfectant
- Don’t sweep up rodent droppings into the air where they can be inhaled
- 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;

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If you do notice a rodent problem and want to prevent infestations, there are several steps you can take:

- Seal holes inside and outside the home
- Trap rodents around the home
- Clean up rodent food sources and nesting sites by tightly storing all food, pet food, trash, and animal feed
- Get rid of possible nesting sites outside the home by moving woodpiles far from the house, keeping grass and shrubbery well-trimmed.
- Elevate hay and trash at least 1 foot off the ground

To properly clean up after rodents, trap all live rodents and seal entryways. After 1 week of trapping, if no additional rodents are captured, enough time has passed that the urine/droppings or nesting material is no longer infectious. When cleaning:

- Wear gloves to clean urine/droppings and soak the droppings with bleach before picking up with paper towel
- Clean and disinfect the whole area
- For heavy infestations, use gloves, goggles, protective clothing, and a respirator

For more information, go to: <http://health.utah.gov/epi/diseases/hantavirus/>

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