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Page 1 of 2

NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION NEWS RELEASE

Hantavirus Reported in Elko County

Carson City –The Nevada State Health Division announced today that an Elko County resident contracted Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). Unfortunately, the individual has succumbed to the disease. An investigation has begun to determine possible ways this person may have contracted the disease.

HPS was initially recognized in 1993 following an outbreak in the Four Corners region of the southwestern United States. Since 1993 through May 9, 2006, a total of 438 cases of HPS have been reported in the United States, with 18 occurring in Nevada. Thirty-six percent of all reported cases in the United States have resulted in death.

HPS is a rare, but often fatal respiratory disease caused by a virus transmitted to humans through the urine, feces and saliva of wild rodents, primarily deer mice. The illness starts with flu-like symptoms, including fever, headache, muscle ache and fatigue, and may rapidly progress to lung failure and sometimes death.

The Health Division reminds the public to take precautions when entering cabins, trailers and other buildings that may be infested with rodents to prevent exposure to the virus that causes HPS. People can be infected by breathing dust contaminated with mouse urine or droppings. Cleaning or occupying poorly ventilated places with heavy rodent infestations are considered particularly hazardous. Engaging in hiking and other outdoor recreational activities is not believed to be a significant risk factor for HPS infection.

To avoid being infected with HPS, Dr. Bradford Lee, State Health Officer is recommending that people:

- Avoid settings, especially indoors, where they may come in contact with wild rodents.
- Do not live-trap, touch or otherwise handle rodents.
- Do not allow rodents access to food and water in homes; store food in rodent-proof containers; and immediately clean dishes.
- When cleaning infested areas, don't stir up dust by sweeping up or vacuuming up droppings, urine or nesting materials. Instead, thoroughly wet contaminated areas with detergent or liquid disinfectant to deactivate the virus. Once everything is wet, take up

(more)



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Page Two

contaminated materials with a damp towel, then mop or sponge the area with disinfectant. Remember to wear latex rubber gloves before cleaning up.

- Spray dead rodents or areas contaminated with droppings and urine with diluted bleach or other household disinfectant. Wear plastic gloves to place the waste in a plastic bag (double-bag) and discard it in the trash. Wash hands thoroughly after handling rodent waste.
- Prevent infestations by rodent-proofing buildings, removing debris, moving woodpiles and other rodent habitat away from homes, and removing food sources.
- When going into cabins or infested work areas that have been closed for awhile, open them up and air out before cleaning.

The Nevada State Health Division is encouraging the public to make homes, workplaces, and vacation homes unattractive to rodents. Clean up infested areas by using safety precautions. Wet down infested areas with bleach/disinfectant to kill the virus before it becomes airborne.

For an informational brochure regarding hantavirus, visit the Health Division's website: <http://health2k.state.nv.us/pio/releases/HantaVirusFinal.pdf>.

For additional information, access the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hanta/hps/index.htm

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