



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORE RODENTS TEST POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS

Use Wet Cleaning Methods, Don't Sweep or Vacuum Rodent Droppings

Six more rodents trapped by County Vector Control technicians last week have tested positive for the sometimes-deadly hantavirus, County officials said Wednesday.

The rodents, four Harvest mice and two California Meadow Voles, were trapped in Fairbanks Ranch and northern Escondido near the San Luis Rey River bringing this year's total to 16 rodents testing positive for hantavirus. In 2010, a total of 21 rodents tested positive for hantavirus.

"Recent rains have created an abundance of food for rodents, which can increase the rodent population," said County Environmental Health Director Jack Miller. "More rodents can lead to more hantavirus."

People should never sweep up or vacuum rodent droppings and nesting materials. Instead, ventilate closed areas and use wet cleaning methods with a 10 percent bleach solution or other full strength disinfectant. The best way to prevent the disease is to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds by sealing all holes larger than the size of a dime.

Wild rodents, primarily deer mice, carry hantavirus. People can contract it by inhaling dust particles from rodent droppings and nesting materials that contain the virus. The virus can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), which begins with flu-like symptoms, but can graduate to severe breathing difficulties and even death. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for hantavirus and the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that HPS has killed 36 percent of all the people known to have contracted the disease.

How to Avoid Exposure:

- Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.
- Avoid rodent infested areas. Do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with feces and urine.
- Clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method described below.

Use "wet-cleaning" methods to prevent inhaling the virus:

- **DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS.**
- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water), or other full strength disinfectant onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

For more information, contact the County Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/hantavirus.html>. Watch: "[Hantavirus - The Airborne Menace.](#)"

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