



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TWO MICE IN NORTH COUNTY TEST POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS *Environmental Health Officials Ask Public to Use Caution When Cleaning Rodent Droppings*

County Vector Control officials confirmed today that one wild harvest mouse in Rancho Santa Fe and one northern Baja deer mouse in Rancho Bernardo trapped during routine monitoring tested positive for hantavirus.

“It is important to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds to prevent infection,” said Gary Erbeck, Director of the County Department of Environmental Health. “People contract hantavirus by inhaling it, often when they are cleaning up rodent droppings and nesting materials. Use wet cleaning methods to prevent inhaling the virus.”

Vector Control randomly samples wild mice to determine the extent of the virus, which is carried by wild rodents, primarily deer mice. The virus is found in rodent droppings and urine and can be inhaled by humans when it becomes airborne. The airborne virus can cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), which can begin with symptoms similar to the flu, but in rare cases, can lead to severe breathing difficulties and even death. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for hantavirus.

To avoid exposure: eliminate rodent infestations immediately; avoid rodent-infested areas; do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with rodent droppings or urine; and clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method below.

- **Do not sweep or vacuum infested areas.** Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for several hours.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup water) onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas. Let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning with a sponge or 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 www.sdvector.com.

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