



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WILD MOUSE TESTS POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS

County Urges Residents To Use Caution When Cleaning Up Rodent Droppings

County Vector Control officials confirmed today that one wild Northern Baja mouse trapped in the Otay River Valley during routine monitoring tested positive for Hantavirus. This brings the total to 16 mice that have tested positive for Hantavirus this year.

"Hantavirus is preventable and can be fatal. The wet winter has provided plenty of food and shelter for mice, helping to increase the wild mouse population. It is extremely important to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds to prevent infection.." said Jack Miller, Director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "People contract Hantavirus by inhaling the virus, often when they are cleaning up rodent droppings and nesting materials. Wet cleaning methods should be used to prevent inhaling the virus."

Vector Control randomly samples wild mice to determine the extent of the virus. Hantavirus 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.

Several precautions should be taken to avoid exposure:

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

DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS. Instead, use wet cleaning methods:

- 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) 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>.

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