



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2009

Contact: Chris Conlan (858) 694-2137

WILD MOUSE TESTS POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS *Use Caution When Cleaning Up Rodent Droppings*

County Vector Control officials confirmed today that one harvest mouse trapped during routine monitoring in the San Luis Rey River area near Bonsall has tested positive for hantavirus. This is the fourth mouse detected with the disease this year.

“Hantavirus is a rare, but sometimes fatal disease,” said Gary Erbeck, Director of the County Department of Environmental Health. “People contract the disease by inhaling the virus, often when they are cleaning up rodent droppings and nesting materials.”

Vector Control staff will conduct more testing in the area 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 several hours.
- 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 www.sdvector.com. ###