



State of New Mexico
County of Otero

October 05, 2007

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to weather conditions experienced during the past year the rodent population in Otero County, and New Mexico in general, has seen an above average increase. With this comes an increased potential for the spread of Hantavirus and other rodent-borne diseases.

Hantavirus is a severe respiratory illness that can be deadly. It can be transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings, or saliva. Breathing in the aerosolized virus is the most common way of becoming infected; however, you can also become infected by touching anything (tools, furniture, and clothing) where the virus has been deposited and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Early symptoms of Hantavirus are fever and muscle aches, possibly with chills, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain and cough. These symptoms develop within one to six weeks after rodent exposure. Although there is no specific treatment for Hantavirus, chances for recovery are better if medical attention is sought early.

You can minimize your potential exposure by doing the following:

- **CLEAN UP** dead mice, mouse droppings and nests by spraying with a 10% bleach solution or a household disinfectant until thoroughly wet. Wear rubber gloves and wipe up the wet materials with paper towels and place the dead rodents, droppings, and other materials in a plastic bag and seal. Put the plastic bag into another plastic bag, seal and dispose of in the trash. Spray or mop the area again with disinfectant. Carpets and furniture can be disinfected or shampooed. Bedding and clothes can be washed using lots of soap and hot water. Leave books, papers and other items that cannot be cleaned with a liquid disinfectant outdoors in the sunlight for several hours. Wipe the items with a cloth moistened with disinfectant.

Limit food sources for rodents by storing all food and garbage in containers with tight fitting lids. Do not leave pet food, human food, water or dirty dishes or cooking utensils out over night. Store animal feed in metal or thick plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. Elevate hay, woodpiles and garbage cans at least 12 inches to

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eliminate possible nesting sites. Store them at least 100 feet away from your house, if possible. Clear weeds, brush, and dense shrubbery from around house foundations. Haul away abandoned vehicles and other items that might provide nesting sites for rodents.

- **AIR OUT** structures that have been closed and may contain mice. Open doors and windows and air out for at least 30 minutes before cleaning. Special precautions including the use of respirators with N-100 filters should be taken before entering a heavily infested structure.
- **SEAL UP** buildings and structures so that mice cannot enter (deer mice can enter a hole as small as a dime). Use sturdy materials that rodents cannot chew through such as metal lath, cement, copper mesh or other patching materials.
- **TRAP UP** mice using snap traps baited with peanut butter. Thoroughly spray the dead mice and traps with disinfectant; wear rubber gloves and place dead mice and traps in a plastic bag, seal and place in another plastic bag before discarding in the trash. To prevent exposure to plague-infected fleas from the trapped rodents, apply an insecticide labeled for household use around the rodent trap, to kill any fleas that may jump off the mouse. Always follow label directions.

For more information about Hantavirus, call the New Mexico Department of Health at 800-879-3421 or visit their website:

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/epi/hanta.html>

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