

For Immediate Release:

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Department of Health Announces First Hantavirus Case in NM This Year

Case is McKinley County Female

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Department of Health announced today that a 44-year-old woman from McKinley County is hospitalized in critical condition at UNM Hospital in Albuquerque with the state's first case of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome this year. An environmental investigation will be conducted to determine where the woman may have been exposed to the virus.

"We want everyone to be aware that Hantavirus is present through out our state and that precautions need to be taken to avoid rodents and their droppings," said Dr. Paul Ettestad, the Department's public health veterinarian. "Most people are exposed to Hantavirus in or around their homes, especially when they clean out enclosed areas that have lots of mouse droppings. The best defense against Hantavirus is to avoid disturbing areas of rodent infestation, including nests and droppings. As warmer weather occurs, people need to air out their cabins and sheds before entering them for the first time."

Hantavirus is a deadly disease transmitted by infected rodents through urine, droppings or saliva. People can contract the disease when they breathe in aerosolized virus. The deer mouse is the main reservoir for Hantavirus in New Mexico. The Department of Health urges health-care workers and the general public to familiarize themselves with the symptoms of Hantavirus.

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.

To protect yourself, avoid contact with mice and other rodents. Other important steps are:

- Air out closed up buildings before entering.
- Seal up homes and cabins so mice can't enter.
- Trap mice until they are all gone.
- Clean up nests and droppings using a disinfectant.
- Put hay, wood, and compost piles as far as possible from your home.
- Get rid of trash and junk piles.
- Don't leave your pet's food and water where mice can get to it.

In 2009, New Mexico had four cases of Hantavirus, none fatal, from Santa Fe, Taos, San Miguel, and Rio Arriba counties. In 2008, New Mexico had two cases of Hantavirus, both fatal, from Taos and Otero counties.

For more information about Hantavirus, check out the Department's website:

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/ERD/HealthData/hantavirus.shtml>.

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There are 16 qualifying conditions for medical cannabis: severe chronic pain, painful peripheral neuropathy, intractable nausea/vomiting, severe anorexia/cachexia, hepatitis C infection currently receiving antiviral treatment, Crohn's disease, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Inflammatory Autoimmune-mediated Arthritis, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease), cancer, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, damage to the nervous tissue of the spinal cord with intractable spasticity, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, and hospice care.

There are 1,664 active patients in the program. There are five nonprofit producers and 565 patients who are approved to produce for their own use.

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