



HANTAVIRUS CONFIRMED IN WARM SPRINGS

The first case of Hantavirus in a Warm Springs resident has been confirmed according to the Jefferson County Public Health Department. There have been only 17 other Oregon cases.

Hantavirus cases are rare in this country but have been found from Canada to Argentina. This disease, carried primarily by deer mice in North America, can be deadly if not diagnosed quickly. Unfortunately, however, the illness presents with nonspecific symptoms of low-grade fever, aches and pains – that is, flu-like symptoms.

Hantavirus is carried by mice who are not sick but who excrete the virus in urine, feces, and saliva. About 10% of mice in our area may be infected with the virus. The most common human exposure to Hantavirus occurs during the cleaning of and working in spaces that have been inhabited by mice – garages, sheds, barns, crawl spaces. The virus particles dry and then become airborne when the debris is swept or vacuumed. Breathing this dust is the most common route of infection. The incubation period can be from 1 to 4 weeks.

The Hantavirus is **not** spread from person-to-person, nor is it spread among domesticated animals, nor from domesticated animals to humans.

Before cleaning out rodent-infested areas, make sure to air the space out for at least an hour prior to performing the work, spray the droppings or nests with a bleach solution or household disinfectant. (Mix 1 1/2 cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of water.) Leave solution on area for about 15 minutes. Once everything is wet, wipe up the debris with a damp paper towel, and then mop the area with the bleach solution.

Also, take personal precautions when cleaning rodent-infested areas:

- Use rubber, latex, vinyl, or nitrile disposable gloves,

- Wear a particulate respirator face mask,

- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water (or waterless alcohol-based hand cleaners when soap and water is not available).

Seal all refuse in double plastic bags, and dispose of this, and personal protection equipment, in an appropriate waste disposal system. It should be noted that utilizing a live trap system can cause further exposure as a rodent may aerosolize urine upon capture and special care and equipment should be used to handle live rodents.

With the onset of spring and spring-cleaning, the public and health care personnel need to have a heightened awareness of this dangerous virus.

Masks may be obtained by the Community Health Department or through the Tribal Sanitarian, both in Pod A of the Warm Springs Health and wellness Center.

For additional questions about prevention, please direct questions to both Community Health or the Sanitarian, Nancy Collins.

References: www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/hantavirus/hantavirus.

Rabinowitz, Peter M. & Lisa A. Conti. 2010. Human-animal medicine: clinical approach to zoonoses, toxicants, and other shared health risks.