



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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## **COUNTY ENCOURAGES PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT HANTAVIRUS INFECTION**

*Rodent-Borne Respiratory Illness is Rare But Can Be Deadly*

With the recent news that a Mono County man has been diagnosed with hantavirus, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and Department of Environmental Health (DEH) Vector Control encourage the public to take precautions when entering enclosed spaces frequented by wild rodents.

“Hantavirus is rare, but it can be deadly,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H, County Public Health Officer. “People can become infected after opening up vacation homes or when cleaning rooms or buildings that have been empty for a long time. Proper cleaning techniques are important.”

To reduce the risk of hantavirus infection: Do not vacuum, sweep or dust areas for 30 minutes after opening doors and windows. When cleaning rooms or buildings, wet the surfaces with disinfectant (for example, a 10 percent bleach solution) before cleaning.

“The virus has been found in wild rodents in San Diego County in recent years,” said Gary Erbeck, Director, DEH. “Infected rodents shed the virus in their droppings, urine and saliva.”

The last known human case of hantavirus in San Diego County occurred in the Campo area in 2004.

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is caused by a virus carried by wild rodents, primarily deer mice. People who live in rural or suburban areas near undeveloped land are at higher risk from mice entering their homes. People most commonly become infected when they stir up and inhale airborne particles of contaminated rodent droppings, urine and saliva. The virus may also be spread by touching the mouth and nose after handling infected rodents or contaminated objects.

The first signs of illness are similar to flu symptoms and include fatigue, fever and muscle aches; they may also include headache, dizziness, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Later symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome include coughing, shortness of breath rapidly progressing to severe difficulty in breathing, and sometimes death. There is no specific treatment, so prevention is important.

For more information, go to the following link: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/chd/vector/vhantavirus.html>, or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), and click on Diseases and Conditions. For information on rodent control, contact DEH Vector Surveillance and Control Program at (858) 694-2888, or visit the web site at <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/>.

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