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Press Release

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Health Officials Offer Recommendations on How to Avoid Hantavirus

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY - Santa Cruz County health officials offer recommendations on how to avoid hantavirus following the diagnosis of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) in a county resident who survived. HPS is a rare disease. Infection is caused by a virus that individuals contract through contact with the urine, droppings or saliva of wild rodents, primarily deer mice. Breathing small particles of mouse urine or droppings stirred up into the air when entering or cleaning buildings or enclosed spaces where mice are present is the most common means of infection. The illness begins with fever, headache, and muscle aches and progresses rapidly to severe difficulty breathing and, in some cases, death. Prompt diagnosis and medical treatment increase an individual's chances of recovery.

Since HPS was first identified in 1993, there have been more than 70 cases of hantavirus infection in California and over 700 cases reported nationwide. About 30 percent of HPS cases identified in California have been fatal.

Deer mice are present throughout California, but are more common in rural, undeveloped areas. Statewide, approximately 12 percent of deer mice have shown evidence of infection with hantavirus.

(<https://cdphdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=31fd0ca80e264cbd9bba7d54952194de>).

To prevent HPS, the following precautions are recommended:

- Avoid contact with all wild rodents, their droppings, and nesting materials.
- Before entering an enclosed area that may be infested with rodents, allow it to air out for at least 30 minutes.
- Do not dry sweep or vacuum areas that rodents have potentially contaminated.
- Remove wild rodents from inside buildings using spring-loaded “snap” traps.
- Dead rodents, their droppings, nesting materials, and surfaces that rodents may have contaminated with urine or droppings should be wetted with a 10% bleach solution or a commercial disinfectant following label directions before cleaning up.
- Promptly dispose of all cleaning materials when done, and thoroughly wash hands and clothes.
- Examine the outside of all buildings and seal any holes or other areas that would let rodents get inside.
- Store all food items securely in rodent-proof containers.

For additional information about preventing HPS, please visit [CDPH's webpage](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Website](#).



Public Health
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