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News Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Date: June 22, 2009

Fatal Hantavirus Infection Confirmed in Coconino County Visitor

Coconino County Health Department (CCHD) and the Arizona Department of Health Services announced today that hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) has been confirmed in an out-of-state visitor to Coconino County. The individual was hospitalized in another state on June 11 and died on June 12. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that the individual was infected with hantavirus. The individual's travel itinerary included several areas within Northern Arizona. The exact source of the exposure is unknown and is still under investigation.

This is the first case of HPS with probable exposure in Coconino County since a nonfatal case in 2007. There have been no hantavirus cases reported so far in Arizona this year. Last year, Arizona had one case of hantavirus. Two cases of HPS have occurred this year in northern New Mexico.

CCHD officials are recommending that the public follow simple precautions when cleaning garages, campers, cabins, barns and other buildings where rodents may have been present. These precautions can help offer protection from HPS, a rare, but often fatal disease spread by rodents.

HPS is caused by a virus that individuals get through contact with the urine, droppings and saliva of wild mice, primarily deer mice. Breathing small particles of mouse urine or droppings that have been stirred up into the air is the most common means of infection. The illness starts with fever, headache and muscle ache, and progresses rapidly to severe difficulty in breathing and, in some cases, death.

To prevent HPS, public health officials recommend the following:

Proper clean-up methods:

- When rodent droppings or nests are found in and around the home, spray them liberally with a household disinfectant and allow them to soak for at least 15 minutes. Use disinfectants that kill viruses, such as Lysol®, or a solution of one-part household bleach mixed with nine parts water.

- Any rodent droppings and rodent nests should be sprayed with a pesticide to kill fleas before disinfecting or disposing the carcasses. This is to prevent flea bites and possible exposure to another disease, the plague.
- After disinfecting, wear rubber gloves and clean up the droppings with disposable materials such as paper towels, rags or mops.
- Seal all materials, droppings or nests in double plastic bags and dispose of them in the trash.
- Do not clean the droppings or nests by sweeping, brushing or vacuuming, since these methods stir up dust and increase a person's chances of inhaling the virus.

Rodent-proof your home:

- Prevent rodents from entering the home by plugging or sealing all holes and gaps to the outside greater than 1/4-inch in diameter. Use steel wool, thick wire screen, metal flashing or cement to seal holes.
- Eliminate or reduce rodent shelter around the home by removing outdoor junk and clutter, and by moving woodpiles, lumber, hay bales etc., as far away from the house as possible.
- Keep the lawn trimmed and free of excess weeds and brush.
- Do not make food easily available to rodents. Do not leave pet food in dishes. Dispose of garbage in trash cans with tight-fitting lids.
- Wash dirty dishes promptly, and clean up spilled food immediately. Store bulk grains and animal feed in rodent-proof containers.

Rodent control:

- Control rodents inside the home by placing spring-loaded "snap" traps in areas where rodents and their droppings have been observed. Bait the traps with peanut butter and/or oats and check them regularly. When rodents are caught, spray the dead rodents with a disinfectant, such as Lysol or bleach and water, then wait at least 15 minutes. Put on rubber gloves and then seal the dead rodents in plastic bags before disposing of them in a trash can. The snap traps can be disinfected and re-used.
- In areas above 4,500 feet in elevation, any dead rodents and rodent nests should be sprayed with a pesticide to kill fleas before disinfecting or disposing the carcasses. This is to prevent flea bites and possible exposure to another disease, the plague.

Certain forms of outdoor recreation, such as camping and hiking, can pose a risk for hantavirus exposure. A few precautions should be taken, including

- Do not attempt to feed rodents by hand since this often leads to bites.
- Campers should not pitch tents or place sleeping bags in close proximity to rodent nests, burrows, or in areas of heavy rodent activity.
- Before use, properly clean tents and other camping gear that have been stored where rodents may have had access.
- If possible, do not sleep on the bare ground. Use a cot to get up off the ground, or better yet, sleep inside a tent with a floor.
- Keep tents zipped up to keep animals out.

- Keep food in rodent-proof containers, and discard any food items that may have been “raided” by rodents.
- When feasible, promptly dispose of trash in covered containers or temporarily store garbage items away from camp, so as to avoid attracting rodents.
- Use only bottled water or water that has been disinfected by filtration, boiling, chlorination, or iodination for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, and brushing teeth.

For more information regarding HPS, call the Coconino County Health Department at 928-679-7272, toll-free at 1-877-679-7272 or visit www.coconino.az.gov/health.

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