



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
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Our vision: Together with the communities we serve, we are working to make Weld County a healthy place to live, learn, work and play.

NEWS RELEASE

Immediate Release

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Hantavirus Death Confirmed in Weld County

Greeley – The Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment announced today that a Weld County resident died last month of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HSP). The case was confirmed by serologic testing at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment this week. This is the fifth case of hantavirus ever documented in Weld County and the second death.

Sara Evans, Environmental Health Manager at the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment, said, “ We are urging Weld County residents to be cautious and avoid exposure to hantavirus while cleaning in and around homes, buildings, sheds, barns or any structure that is infested with mice.”

Evans explained that the disease is carried by deer mice, which are rural mice, and it can infect humans. This happens when people inhale dirt and dust contaminated with deer mice urine and/or feces or when they come in contact with infected mice in homes, buildings, wood piles or junk piles.

Evans is urging people to be particularly careful where there are mouse droppings and other evidence that mice have been around. A rapid increase in the number of mice in or around a home or structure often precedes a human case, according to Evans.

Before cleaning out buildings and areas that have accumulations of mouse droppings, take these precautions:

- If there are mice occupying the building, use rodent control **before** cleaning the area.
- Avoid stirring up dust by watering down the area with a mixture of water and bleach.
- Open doors or windows to ventilate the building at least 30 – 60 minutes before cleaning.
- Rodent-proof buildings by plugging holes or other places where mice come in.

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- Store all food, such as pet food, animal feed and bird seed in covered containers and properly dispose of garbage in sealed containers.
- Eliminate places where mice can hide: wood and junk piles, abandoned vehicles and in construction materials.

The incubation period for hantavirus varies widely but ranges from 1 – 6 weeks with an average of 2-3 weeks.

Early symptoms of hantavirus include fever, headache and muscle pain, severe abdominal, joint and lower back pain, nausea and vomiting. A cough and shortness of breath usually develop 1 – 5 days after the onset of symptoms. The illness quickly progresses to difficulty breathing due to fluid build-up in the lungs and respiratory failure. If a person or someone in the family develops these symptoms after an exposure, they should seek medical attention immediately.

If hantavirus is suspected or confirmed, early admission to a hospital where careful monitoring and supportive therapy can be provided is most important. “Because there is no effective treatment for the disease,” Evans emphasized, “prevention as the key to avoiding hantavirus.”

For more information or questions about hantavirus, contact the **CO-HELP hotline at 1-877-462-2911**. Additional information and a photograph of a deer or rural mouse can be viewed at www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/zoonosis/hanta/ or visit www.co.weld.co.us/departments/health/.

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