

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TO: Grant County Providers and Media

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

 Heather Massart, Public Information Officer
 Phone: 509-766-7960 ext. 16

 Amber McCoy, RS, Environmental Health Specialist
 Phone: 509-766-7960 ext. 14

UPDATE- Grant County Resident Confirmed with Hantavirus

Grant County – Health District officials have confirmed a case of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) in a middle-aged Grant County resident. The individual is believed to have been exposed to contaminated deer mouse droppings while cleaning out their vehicle. The individual has been released from the hospital and is expected to make a full recovery.

This confirmed case of hantavirus is the first one reported in Grant County in six years. In 2012, two Grant County residents died of HPS from unrelated incidents. On average, 1 to 5 confirmed Hantavirus cases are reported each year in our state.

What is HPS and how do people get it?

Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) is a rare illness caused by a virus found in the urine, droppings and saliva of infected rodents. In Washington State, deer mice are the only carriers of the virus. As deer mice live throughout Grant County, human cases of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome can occur in any part of the county.



A person can get HPS by breathing in particles contaminated with hantavirus. This can happen when dust from dried rodent urine, saliva, and droppings that contain hantavirus are stirred up in the air. People can also get infected by touching rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials that contain the virus, and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. It's also possible to get HPS from a rodent bite. *The disease does not spread person-to-person.* The greatest risk occurs when people enter enclosed areas with rodent infestation and poor air circulation, such as sheds and other outbuildings, cabins, building crawl spaces, vehicles and campers.

What are the symptoms of HPS?

HPS illness usually begins one to six weeks after a person breathes in the virus. Early signs include fever, muscle aches, headaches, dizziness, chills, nausea, vomiting. As the disease gets worse, it causes coughing and shortness of breath and can lead to respiratory failure. People with hantavirus are usually hospitalized, and about one out of three people diagnosed with HPS have

died. **If you have been exposed to rodents or rodent infested buildings and have symptoms, see your doctor immediately and tell them about your possible rodent exposure.**

How can HPS be prevented?

You can prevent HPS by avoiding wild rodents and keeping them out of the places you live, work and play. Remove their sources of food, water, and shelter and keep these areas rodent-proofed. Seal up cracks and gaps in buildings that are larger than ¼ inch, including window and door sills, under sinks around the pipes, in foundations, attics, and any rodent entry hole.

How should rodent-infested areas be cleaned?

If you do have a rodent infestation, it's important to take precautions when entering these spaces and during cleaning.

- Before entering rodent-infested spaces, “air-out” the space by opening multiple doors and windows for at least 30 minutes to allow fresh air to circulate. Leave the area while it is airing out.
- Wear rubber or plastic gloves. A dust mask may provide some protection against dust, molds, and insulation fibers, but does not protect against viruses. A properly fitted N-95 mask will offer better protection.
- Do **not** vacuum, sweep, or otherwise stir up dust.
- Thoroughly spray contaminated areas including trapped mice, droppings, and nests with a mixture of bleach and water:
 - Mix 1½ cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of water (or 1 part bleach to 9 parts water).
 - Soak area for 10 minutes, then remove all of the nest material, mice or droppings with damp paper towels and throw the paper towels in the garbage.
 - Mop or sponge the area with bleach solution.
- Wash gloves with disinfectant or soap and water before taking them off. Remove the gloves, then wash hands with soap and water.
- Steam clean or shampoo upholstered furniture, carpets and car interiors, and wash any bedding or clothing in hot water if you see any mouse or rat urine or droppings on them.
- Areas with heavy infestation (piled up droppings, numerous nests and dead rodents) require extra precaution. Professional cleaning and/or pest control services may be needed.

How should dead rodents and rodent nests be discarded?

- Follow instructions above for wearing and taking off gloves.
- Spray dead rodents and nests with disinfectant and let it soak.
- Seal the dead rodent/nest and all cleaning materials in a bag, then seal that bag in a second bag.
- Throw the bag into a covered trash can.

How can people stay safe while hiking, camping and enjoying the outdoors?

- Do not handle or feed wild rodents!
 - Air out cabins and shelters, then check for signs of rodents. Do not sweep out infested cabins. Instead, use the guidelines above for disinfecting cabins or shelters before sleeping in them.
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- Do not pitch tents or place sleeping bags near rodent droppings or burrows.
- If possible, do not sleep on the bare ground. Use tents with floors or a ground cloth.
- Keep food in thick plastic or metal containers with tight-fitting lids!
- Handle trash according to site restrictions and keep it in rodent-proof containers until thrown

Additional Information:

[Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome \(HPS\)](#)- Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

[What is Hantavirus?](#) – Washington State Department of Health

[Hantavirus](#)- Grant County Health District

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