February 22, 2024 PHAN-001-24

Navajo Department of Health

**Public Health Advisory Notice (PHAN)**

**First Hantavirus Case of 2024**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. –** The Navajo Nation reports the first Hantavirus case of 2024 in San Juan County. The Navajo Department of Health, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center and Indian Health Service, issues its Public Health Advisory Notice to caution the Navajo public regarding Hantavirus (interchangeably referred to as Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome or HPS). Deer mice are the primary carriers of Hantavirus. The virus is found in mice droppings and urine, and individuals are typically exposed to Hantavirus around their homes, cabins, or sheds, especially when cleaning out or exploring enclosed areas with mouse droppings.

In 2023, there were nine (9) cases confirmed within the Navajo Nation – New Mexico (San Juan and McKinley Counties) and Arizona (Navajo and Apache Counties).

Hantavirus infections can occur all year, according to documented cases there is an increase in HPS infections during the spring season. During periods of high rain and snowfall, evidence shows there are increases in hantavirus cases. Due to the spring season and the recent rain and snow fall this public health advisory is urging all Navajo citizens to practice preventative measures to avoid contracting hantavirus.

Hantavirus is transmitted to people that come into contact with or breathe infected deer mice droppings and urine. Those who may be exposed to Hantavirus will occur around their home, shed and poorly ventilated areas. It is essential to take appropriate precautions when entering and cleaning sheds, garages, campers, cabins, barns, and other buildings. Check your surroundings for mouse droppings. To avoid outbreaks, consider preventative actions to stop the spread, such as cleaning around the home. Hantavirus is not spread from person to person.

Symptoms of HPS can be much like COVID-19 or the flu, and only a medical exam and laboratory tests can determine the difference. Monitor any flu like symptoms and respiratory symptoms. There is no vaccine or cure for HPS, but steps can be taken to reduce the risk of contracting hantavirus.

We encourage the public to take the risk of contracting hantavirus seriously and advise the public to take precautionary steps to reduce the risk of infection. We encourage everyone to continue monitoring any flu-like symptoms. Please be cautious of any unclean surroundings that may have rodents and mouse droppings.

To prevent HPS, public health officials recommend the following:

* Beware of signs of rodent activity (i.e., droppings, nests, etc.).
* Open all doors and windows for 30 minutes to air out before entering a shed (i.e., barn, garage, etc.).
* Do not stir up dust by vacuuming, sweeping, or by any other means when cleaning up rodent droppings.
* When rodent droppings or nests are found, spray them with a household disinfectant and allow them to soak for at least 15 minutes. Disinfectant solution can be made by mixing 1 cup of bleach with one gallon of water.
* After disinfecting, wear rubber gloves and clean up the droppings with disposable materials such as paper towels, rags, or disposable mop heads.
* Seal all materials, droppings, or nests in double plastic bags and dispose of them in the trash.
* Prevent rodents from entering the home by plugging or sealing all holes and gaps to the outside greater than 1/4-inch in diameter.
* Eliminate or reduce rodent shelter around the home by removing outdoor junk and clutter and moving woodpiles, lumber, hay bales, etc.
* Do not make food readily available to rodents. Do not leave pet food in the dishes. Dispose of garbage in trash cans with tight-fitting lids.

For more information regarding Hantavirus prevention, call the Navajo Epidemiology Center at 928-871-6539 or visit <https://www.nec.navajo-nsn.gov/Projects/Infectious-Disease> and <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus>.