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Grant County Resident Dies From Hantavirus

GRANT COUNTY, WA – Grant County Health District (GCHD) recently confirmed that a Grant County resident in their 20s died from Hantavirus. The Washington State Public Health Laboratory (DOH) informed GCHD of the positive lab result on June 10, 2024. The individual had a known exposure to rodents before their illness, likely inside a vehicle. The last confirmed case of Hantavirus in Grant County occurred in 2019. This is the sixth case of Hantavirus in Grant County in the past 20 years and the first reported case in Washington in 2024.

“We are deeply saddened by the passing of one of our community members due to Hantavirus. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the loved ones of this individual,” states Dr. Alexander Brzezny, Grant County Health Officer.

About Hantavirus - Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) is a rare but sometimes deadly illness caused by a virus found in the urine, droppings, and saliva of infected rodents. In Washington State, deer mice are the carriers of the virus.

People become sick with Hantavirus by breathing in contaminated dust from fresh urine, droppings, or nests of infected rodents. The greatest risk occurs in enclosed areas, such as sheds, cabins, or vehicles, with rodent infestation and poor air circulation. People can also be infected when they touch objects contaminated with the virus and then touch their nose or mouth. It cannot spread from one person to another.

Hantavirus Symptoms - The illness usually begins one to six weeks after being exposed. Early signs include mild flu-like symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Dizziness

- Chills
- Abdominal problems such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach pain

Four to 10 days after the initial phase of illness, the late symptoms of HPS appear. These include cough, shortness of breath, and tightening of the chest due to fluid filling the lungs. Hospitalization is usually necessary, and a little over one-third of cases result in death.

Prevent Hantavirus - GCHD recommends the following when cleaning areas where deer mice and other rodents may be present:

- Ventilate the space before cleaning by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Avoid stirring up dust; don't use a leaf blower, vacuum, broom, or cleaning methods such as dry dusting.
- Wear rubber, latex, vinyl, or nitrile (synthetic rubber) gloves.
- Thoroughly wet any contaminated areas — including trapped or dead rodents, droppings, and nests — with a 10% bleach solution.
 - *Here's how to do it:*
 - *Mix 1½ cups of household bleach in 1 gallon of cold water (or 1 part bleach to 9 parts water). Make this solution fresh before each use.*
 - *Use a spray bottle to spray the affected area with bleach and water solution until very wet. Let everything soak for 5-10 minutes.*
 - *Use paper towels or rags that can be discarded to pick up or wipe up rodents, nest material, mice, and/or droppings, and/or urine.*
 - *Mop or sponge the area with the bleach solution.*
- Double-bag the dirty rags and any dead rodents and place them in a sealed garbage can.
- Wash gloves with disinfectant or soap and water before removing them, then wash your hands with soap and water after removing your gloves.

Rodent Infestation in Vehicles - Rodents may enter vehicles through rust holes, vents, and other openings. Once inside, they may build nests in engine compartments, ducting and air filtration components, trunks, spare tire compartments, glove boxes, etc. If you suspect a vehicle may be infested by mice, protect yourself from hantavirus by taking the following actions:

- Before inspecting the vehicle, open all doors and the engine compartment to air it out for at least 30 mins. Do not start the vehicle.
 - Wearing gloves and a long-sleeved shirt, carefully inspect the vehicle for rodent nesting material, droppings, and dead rodents.
 - Soak areas of the vehicle where you have found droppings and nesting materials with the bleach solution described above.
 - Use paper towels to pick up any nesting material or droppings and dispose of the waste in a sealed outdoor garbage container. Do not vacuum, sweep, or dust.
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- For more detailed information about cleaning rodent-infested vehicles, click the link: [Cleaning-infested vehicles from Public Health – Seattle & King County.](#)

Heavy Rodent Infestations – Special precautions should be used for cleaning areas with heavy rodent infestations (i.e., piled up droppings, numerous nests or dead rodents). Homeowners should consider hiring a professional company to clean up heavily contaminated areas.

Keep Rodents Out of Your Environment - While the steps above will minimize the risk of exposure, **the best way to prevent Hantavirus is rodent control.** Consider the following to help keep rodents out of your space:

- Seal holes and gaps in your home, garage, or vehicles.
- Place traps in and around your home.
- Clean up any easy-to-get food that might attract rodents.
- Remove their places to hide near your home like wood piles and garbage collection areas.

What To Do If You Are Exposed to Rodents - There is no test to determine if you have been exposed to hantavirus. It can only be detected in a blood test once symptoms appear. If you have exposure to rodents, you should monitor yourself for symptoms for up to eight weeks after the exposure. If symptoms do appear, seek medical attention, and inform your healthcare provider about the rodent exposure.

Resources - Click the link(s) to learn more about the following topics -

[How to Clean Up After Rodents](#)

[Hantavirus | Washington State Department of Health](#)

[More about Hantavirus - CDC](#)

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