

Caution urged to avoid hantavirus

Health officials are reminding individuals to take precautions when entering cabins, trailers and other buildings that may be infested with rodents.

A Placer County resident recently died from hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS).

HPS is caused by a virus that people can get through contact with the urine, droppings or saliva of wild rodents, primarily deer mice. Breathing small particles of mouse urine or droppings that have become airborne is the most common means of infection. The illness begins with fever, headache, and muscle aches and progresses rapidly to severe difficulty breathing and, in some cases, death.

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), a total of 75 HPS cases were reported in the state from February 1980 through November 2017. About a third of HPS cases identified in California have been fatal.

The last known case of hantavirus in El Dorado County occurred in 2007. That person recovered. Prompt diagnosis and medical treatment increase an individual's chances of recovery.

To prevent HPS, the CDPH recommends the following precautions:

- Avoid contact with all wild rodents, their droppings, and nesting materials.
- Before entering an enclosed area that may be infested with rodents, allow it to air out for at least 30 minutes.
- Do not dry sweep or vacuum areas that rodents have potentially contaminated.
- Surfaces that rodents may have contaminated with urine

or droppings should be made wet with a 10 percent bleach solution or a commercial disinfectant following label directions, then mopped up.

Promptly dispose of all cleaning materials when done, and thoroughly wash hands and clothes.

- Examine the outsides of all buildings and seal any holes or other openings that would let rodents get inside.
- Store all food items securely in rodent-proof containers