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State Health Department Issues Hantavirus Disease Warning

BISMARCK, N.D. – People who are cleaning cabins or other buildings that had been closed for the winter should protect themselves against hantavirus, a disease transmitted by infected mice, according to the North Dakota Department of Health.

“Although our last two cases were reported in 2000, there is always a potential for contracting hantavirus disease in North Dakota,” said Kirby Kruger, epidemiologist with the Department of Health. “It is important to keep our houses, summer cabins and workplaces free from rodents. Preventing infection is important, as there is no cure for the disease.”

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is a viral infection that causes severe lung disease. The virus can be transmitted to people through bites, urine and fecal droppings, but it is not transmitted from person to person.

Symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome usually occur two to three weeks after infection. Early symptoms commonly include fever, muscle and body aches, fatigue, headache, dizziness, chills, nausea and vomiting. The illness worsens within a short period of time to include coughing, severe shortness of breath when lungs fill with fluid.

For more information, call Kirby Kruger, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2694.

Please note: A fact sheet containing important precautions to minimize the risk of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome infection is available on the North Dakota Department of Health website at www.health.state.nd.us.

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