



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

Weekly Safety Meeting

Hantavirus Safety

Hantavirus infection is caused by a virus that is found in some field rodents, especially deer mice in the United States.

The virus is rarely transmitted to people; when it is, the virus can cause severe illness—even death.

People can contract the disease when they breathe the virus, which is found in the urine, saliva, or droppings of infected rodents. Hantavirus infections usually occur in rural or semirural areas where workers are more likely to contact infected rodents or their droppings. Those infected with the virus have shown flu-like symptoms that turn to a dangerous, pneumonia-like condition after two or three days.

Transmission:

Infected rodents shed the virus in saliva, urine, and droppings. The virus is usually spread to humans when particles of infected saliva, urine, or feces are inhaled.

The virus may be inhaled during direct contact with the rodents or from breathing airborne dust particles generated when rodent excreta are disturbed.

People may also become infected if contaminated materials come into contact with broken skin or the membranes lining the eyelids and the eyeball.

It has not been determined if it is possible to become infected by eating or drinking food or water contaminated by rodents. Infection by rodent bites has been documented but is rare.

The virus does not appear to cause illness in its rodent hosts.

Symptoms of Hantavirus:

When infection occurs, symptoms may appear 1 to 6 weeks after exposure to rodents or their droppings. Beginning symptoms include:

- Severe muscle aches;
- Chills and fever;
- Headache or dizziness;
- Difficulty breathing or coughing;
- Respiratory problems or failure;
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain; and
- Low blood pressure.

People experiencing these symptoms should contact their doctor immediately.

Treatment:

There is no treatment or vaccine for hantavirus. Medical care can help reduce the symptoms while the infected person is recovering.

Prevention:

There are several ways of preventing hantavirus infections.

Personal protection measures listed below will help lower exposure to airborne particles when cleaning up rodent droppings.

- Do not vacuum, sweep, or dust.
- Air out unused rooms or buildings that have been empty for a long period of time for 30 minutes by opening doors and windows.
- Use wet cleaning method:
 - Put on latex rubber gloves before cleaning up.
 - DO NOT stir up dust by sweeping up or vacuuming up droppings, urine, or nesting materials.
 - Instead, use wet cleaning methods:
 - Make a disinfectant solution (9 parts water to 1-part bleach) or a store-bought disinfectant and follow the label instructions.
 - Spray the disinfectant solution on polluted areas and let it sit for 15-20 minutes before cleaning.
 - Soak sponges in the disinfectant solution and clean.
 - Place all cleaning materials in a sealed plastic bag and throw them away immediately.
- Always wear latex or rubber gloves and protective respiratory equipment, such as a face mask.
- Spray dead rodents or droppings with disinfectants before removing.
- Place dead rodents and their nesting material in a sealed plastic bag before throwing them away.
- After cleaning, wash your gloved hands, remove the gloves and dispose of them, and then wash your bare hands as well.

Remember:

Do not sweep or vacuum up mouse or rat urine, droppings, or nests. This will cause virus particles to go into the air, where they can be breathed in.

Make it your mission...not to live in unsafe condition!!

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Supervisor:	Subject:
Location:	Date:
Conducted By:	Trainer Signature:

Name (print clearly)	Signature	Comments / Safety Concerns / Training Requests

