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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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### **North Dakota Department of Health Reports Recent Hantavirus Case**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) announced today that a resident of northeast North Dakota was hospitalized with Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a rare, but potentially fatal disease spread by infected rodent droppings, urine, and saliva. The case is a school-aged child who had contact with rodent-infested buildings.

People can be exposed to hantavirus by breathing in air contaminated with the virus when fresh rodent droppings, urine, or nesting materials are stirred up. Hantavirus is not transmitted from person to person. The greatest risk is associated with exposure to rodent droppings in enclosed areas.

“This case serves as a reminder for people to be mindful of the presence or evidence of rodents when cleaning a house, barn, or other building, especially in rural areas,” said Jill Baber, epidemiologist with the NDDoH division of Disease Control. “It is important to avoid actions that raise dust, such as sweeping or vacuuming, if signs of rodents are present.”

The NDDoH recommends the following steps to safely clean areas with possible rodent infestation:

- Ventilate the space by opening the doors and windows for 30 minutes. You should leave the area during this period.
- Do not stir up dust by sweeping or vacuuming up droppings, urine, or nesting materials.
- Wear gloves and spray disinfectant on dead rodents, droppings, or nesting materials with disinfectant. Use a paper towel to pick up urine and droppings and dispose of the waste in a garbage container.
- Mop floors and clean countertops, cabinets, and drawers with disinfectant.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after the cleanup.
- Do not have young children assist with cleanup of potentially infectious material.

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Symptoms of HPS 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 and severe shortness of breath when lungs fill with fluid. Anyone with exposure to wild rodents who experiences these symptoms should contact their physician.

The last reported case in North Dakota was in 2015. Including this case, there have been fifteen cases of HPS that have been reported to the NDDoH since 1993, when the virus was first recognized in the United States. Seven of the fifteen cases were fatal. Nationally, through Jan. 6, 2016, 690 cases have been reported with 36 percent resulting in death. About 75 percent of all cases in the U.S. have occurred in residents living in rural areas.

For more information, contact Jill Baber, NDDoH, at 701.328.2378.

*Please note:*

*A fact sheet containing important precautions to minimize the risk of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome infection is available at [www.ndhealth.gov/Disease/Documents/faqs/Hantavirus.pdf](http://www.ndhealth.gov/Disease/Documents/faqs/Hantavirus.pdf).*

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*Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at [www.health.nd.gov/news-media/news-releases](http://www.health.nd.gov/news-media/news-releases).*

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