



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
May 25, 2011

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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.

“Hantavirus infection has been associated with cleaning or occupying previously vacant cabins or other dwellings,” said Michelle Feist, epidemiologist with the Department of Health’s Division of Disease Control. “It’s important to take precautions while cleaning buildings infested with rodents. Preventing infection is important since there is no cure for the disease.”

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) 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 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.

Eleven cases of HPS have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health since 1993. Six of these cases were fatal. Nationwide, 529 cases have been reported, of which 36 percent have resulted in death. It is also worth noting that about 75 percent of all cases in the U.S. have been in residents of rural areas.

For more information, call Michelle Feist, North Dakota Department of Health, 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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