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NEWS RELEASE

County Health Officials provide Hantavirus reminder

Two deer mice collected last month near the Sage area southeast of Hemet have tested positive for Hantavirus. The California Department of Public Health confirmed the rodents that Riverside County Environmental Health officials submitted for testing on Dec. 15 and 28, 2011, were infected with the virus. Between 2001 and 2010, approximately 13 percent of the deer mice collected in Riverside County tested positive for Hantavirus. This is fairly consistent with the average for California.

To this date, there are no documented human cases of Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome originating within Riverside County.

Hantavirus may be transmitted by inhalation of tiny droplets contaminated with the virus from deer mouse secretions such as droppings and urine. Infectious deer mice do not appear to show any signs of illness so it is important to keep from stirring-up materials while cleaning up any mouse infested areas around homes especially in rural areas. Residents can take the following steps to reduce their exposure to Hantavirus:

- Ventilate the affected area the night before cleanup by opening doors and windows.
- Use rubber gloves.
- Apply household disinfectants at maximum recommended concentrations for rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps and surrounding area and allow at least 15 minutes contact time before removal.
- Clean the affected area with sponge or mop. DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM.
- Double-bag the disinfectant-soaked rodent and clean-up materials (newspaper, paper towels, etc.) securely in plastic bags and seal.
- Before removing gloves, wash gloved hands in disinfectant, and then in soap and water. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water after removing gloves. Dispose of gloves and clean-up materials with other household waste.

The early warning signs of human infection may include fever, headache, muscle aches, vomiting, and abdominal pain. These symptoms may last a few hours to several days. As the illness progresses, the lungs fill with fluid, making breathing difficult. Respiratory failure can follow rapidly. Of the 56 human cases identified in California since 1980, 37 percent were fatal. Individuals having concerns about illness, should contact their health provider. For more information on Hantavirus and the Vector Control Program, contact the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health in Hemet at (951) 766-9454 or www.rivcoeh.org.