



News Release

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Hantavirus on rise in Stuttgart

HEIDELBERG, Germany – Reported cases of hantavirus in the Stuttgart area have increased dramatically this year, German Health Department representatives in Stuttgart said recently, including three reported cases involving U.S. forces.

In all three U.S. forces cases, the individuals were treated and recovered from the illness.

“We’re fortunate in one respect that the strain of hantavirus common to this area is a relatively milder form of the disease than we sometimes see in other parts of the world, including the United States,” said Col. Larry Connell, Stuttgart Health Clinic commander. “While preventing exposure to the virus is key, we also encourage anybody with symptoms of hantavirus to contact their primary care clinic so they can be evaluated.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the strain of hantavirus common to this area is has a mortality rate of less than 1 percent. Patients may suffer from the abrupt onset of fever and flu-like symptoms, followed by abdominal pain and, in some severe cases, kidney failure. Because European hantaviruses do not spread from human to human, no isolation is needed.

In 2010, more than 1,500 cases of hantavirus infection were reported across Germany, with the majority reported in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. Most occurred among adults living or working in rural areas, living close to a forested area, with frequent outdoor activities in these areas or employed in farming or construction. However it has been noted that urban cases have been on the rise in recent years.

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HANTAVIRUS 2-2-2-2

Hantavirus is carried by rodents – the Red Bank Vole in Germany – and is usually spread through contact with their urine and excrement. In most cases, people are infected when they stir up dust in areas that are frequented by the rodents and breathe in the dried particles of those droppings. Increased numbers of human cases are usually associated with an increase in the red bank vole population in the area and varies from year to year.

Preventing hantavirus begins with keeping rodents away from your home, garage or campsite. Cleaning up spilled food to avoid attracting rodents and sealing holes that could allow them into your house or garage are a good start. When cleaning in areas that are dusty (e.g. attics, garages and basements), wet down or wet mop the area first to avoid disturbing any dust that contain dried rodent droppings and wear a filter mask to avoid breathing in any particles while cleaning. If you need to dispose of dead voles, always wear a mask and gloves. There is no vaccine available to prevent infection with hantaviruses.