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Development Services
Coordinator**

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PLAGUE

Many local rodents are potential hosts for plague carrying fleas, including rock squirrels, prairie dogs, wood rats, ground squirrels, chipmunks, wild rabbits and domestic cats and dogs. Plague is transmitted to humans via fleabite or direct contact with an infected animal. (Cats can contract the plague, but dogs do not.) The disease presents flu like symptoms along with extreme swelling of the lymph nodes. Antibiotics are effective if the illness is quickly and accurately diagnosed. Any large-scale rodent die-off is a possible indication of the plague and should be reported to the Park County Environmental Health Department.

HANTAVIRUS

Hantavirus is present in the saliva, urine and feces of infected mice. People are infected by breathing in the virus during direct contact with rodents or from disturbing dust and feces from mice nests or surfaces contaminated with mice droppings or urine. The deer mouse is the most common host, although the virus has been identified in other wild rodents.

SYMPTOMS

With Hantavirus, initially there are no respiratory symptoms. Hantavirus begins with high fever, severe body aches, headache & vomiting. These symptoms begin from one week to six weeks after exposure. Within one to five days the illness progresses to respiratory distress.

A simple rule of thumb is usually flu like symptoms are not pervasive in the summer months. It is extremely important that if you exhibit these symptoms and have been around a rodent infested environment when you see your physician tell him or her.

Currently there is no effective treatment, and the fatality rate is high. Prevention is the key.

PLAGUE AND HANTAVIRUS PREVENTION TIPS:

The best prevention for both plague and Hantavirus is to avoid contact with wild rodents.

- Rodent proof house shop and barn
- Eliminate food sources
- Limit possible nesting sites
- Practice continuous rodent control
- Do not handle rodents with bare hands, use gloves.
- Soak carcasses and nests with bleach solution (1cup/gallon), double bag and dispose of in an outside waste receptacle.
- Clean contaminated surfaces with bleach solution (1cup/gallon).
- Cover your head and wear a mask (N95 dust mask w/exhalation valve or N95 respirator mask) when handling rodents or rodent clean up.
- Dispose of all items of clothing after handling rodents or rodent clean up.

For more detailed information, visit the Park County Environmental Health Department web site www.parkco.us or www.cdc.gov or www.cdphe.state.co.us or Colorado Help hotline at 1-877-462-2911

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