

2nd hantavirus death announced in Wyoming

Saratoga-area woman dies from illness traced to rodents

By The Associated Press

CHEYENNE - The Wyoming Department of Health is attributing a second Carbon County death to hantavirus.

The department said Tuesday that preliminary test results show hantavirus killed a woman in the Saratoga area last week. That followed a Friday announcement about the death of a Rawlins-area man, also from hantavirus.

There have been only eight cases of hantavirus in Wyoming since 2000. Four of those of have been fatal, including last week's deaths, the department said.

There is no indication that the two recent cases were linked, said Dr. Stacey Anderson, an epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health's preventive health and safety division.

The department is conducting investigations into both cases to figure out how the victims were infected, department spokeswoman Kim Deti said.

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is most commonly transmitted to humans by rodent urine, feces or saliva.

Humans can become infected by breathing in air containing the dried rodent material or if it touches broken skin.

Deer mice are the primary carriers of the disease in Wyoming. Most exposures occur in homes and outbuildings such as a barns.

"Any activity that puts you in contact with rodent urine, droppings, saliva or nesting materials can place you at risk for hantavirus," Anderson said. "Everyone needs to be aware of the risk of hantavirus and take precautions because even healthy people are at risk for HPS infection if exposed to the virus"

Symptoms start within two to three weeks after exposure and include vomiting, high fever and flulike body aches.