

Encountering Mice in our Schools

Hantavirus is a virus that is found in the urine, saliva, or droppings of infected deer mice and some other wild rodents (cotton rats, rice rats in the southeastern United States and the white-footed mouse and the red-backed vole). It causes a very rare but serious lung disease called Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). The virus does not remain active for long once outside of its host – less than 1 week outdoors and a few hours when exposed to direct sunlight. To date, only 7 cases of Hantavirus have been confirmed in BC as far as records go back.

Some of the activities that are associated with exposure to Hantavirus include:

- Sweeping out a barn and other ranch buildings.
- Trapping and studying mice.
- Using compressed air and dry sweeping to clean up wood waste in a sawmill.
- Handling grain contaminated with mouse droppings and urine.
- Entering a barn infested with mice.
- Planting or harvesting field crops.
- Occupying previously vacant dwellings.
- Disturbing rodent-infested areas while hiking or camping.
- Living in dwellings with a sizable indoor rodent population.



Mice are found in all environments here on Vancouver Island and are very difficult to eradicate completely. Rodent control programs are an ongoing effort impacted sometimes by circumstances outside of our control such as weather, demolition and construction in the area and imbalances in an ecosystem.

The maintenance department at SD61 works closely with affected schools to implement controls such as regular focused cleaning and has pest control companies working to bring the mouse population under control. As entry points are found, they are sealed up along with door sweep installation of doors that could provide access.

You can help the process of bringing the impact of mouse presence in our schools to a minimum by doing the following:

- Report the presence of mouse signs such as droppings, nests and sightings to administration so Maintenance can respond appropriately.
- Keep food sealed up tightly
- Keep things organized and avoid clutter.
- Leave areas dry as water can be an attractant in the drier months

Cleaning is performed by the Facilities department. Spot cleaning low number droppings is considered a low-risk activity and is accomplished by spraying the pellet with a local household detergent with gloves on and picking up while wet with a paper towel. An N95 mask or similar is also recommended. Once disposed of the area can be sprayed again and wiped dry. If a nest or area that has been vacant or populated without cleaning for an extended time requires following of a specific procedure and is best performed by qualified professional.

