RAT OWNERS & BREEDERS

Seoul virus is a type of hantavirus carried by both pet and wild rats, that can cause serious illness in people.

Which rodents can carry Seoul virus?
The brown rat (Norway rat) and the black rat can be infected with Seoul virus, and spread it to people. Other mammals can become infected, but do not spread the virus.

How do I know if my rat is infected?
Rats do not show symptoms when they are infected with Seoul virus. The only way to know if they are infected is through laboratory testing.

How long are rats infected with Seoul virus?
Once infected, rats carry and shed the virus for life.

How do rats spread the virus to people?
The virus is spread by an infected rat through bites, saliva, urine, and droppings. The virus can also infect people when dust with dried urine or droppings, or contaminated bedding, is stirred up and gets in the air.

What are the symptoms in people?
Most people with Seoul virus infection will have mild or no symptoms. For people who do develop symptoms, they begin suddenly and may include intense headaches, back and abdominal pain, fever, chills, nausea, and blurred vision.

In rare cases, infection can progress to hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS), a bleeding and kidney disease which causes death in 1 to 2% of cases.

If you have any symptoms, seek prompt medical attention, and tell the healthcare provider about your contact with rats.

Seoul virus is not spread from person to person.

Is this virus the same one that causes Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)?
No. HPS is a different syndrome caused by different types of hantaviruses carried mainly by mice. HPS is typically more severe than HFRS.

How should I clean up after my pet rats to avoid being infected?
Take precautions when cleaning up after your pet rats to reduce your risk of infection.
- Spray urine, droppings, and bedding thoroughly with a disinfectant or 10% bleach and water solution and let soak 5 minutes before wiping or mopping up.
- Do not vacuum, sweep, or otherwise stir up dust.
- Wear rubber, latex, or vinyl gloves and a dust mask.
What can I do to keep my rats safe?

- Do not purchase rats from ratteries in states affected by the Seoul virus outbreak or that are currently under investigation by CDC. See the CDC webpage for outbreak information: www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/outbreaks/seoul-virus/index.html.
- Limit the movement of your rats and avoid comingling your rats with rats from other owners.
- Keep records of all movement of your rats, such as sales, purchases, and events attended.
- Rat owners concerned that they may have rats associated with the Seoul virus outbreak can contact their local health department, who will facilitate testing through CDC. Do not give away or release the rats.

How can I get my rat tested?

CDC is currently providing testing for rats associated with the Seoul virus outbreak only. Owners of rats not linked to an affected rattery may have their rats tested independently through commercial laboratories, like IDEXX. Contact your veterinarian to arrange for testing.

What should I do if my rat tests positive?

Contact your local health department to discuss how best to protect you and your family. There is no treatment for rats infected with Seoul virus. The recommendation for infected rats is either life-long quarantine or humane euthanasia.

For more information on Seoul virus: www.cdc.gov/hantavirus

DOH 333-232 March 2017