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## Health Department Strengthens Infectious Disease Preparedness as Hantavirus Risk Remains Very Low in USVI

**VIDOH says there are no confirmed hantavirus cases in the territory, but it has enhanced coordination with hospitals, EMS, territorial laboratories and federal partners to ensure readiness if a suspected case arises locally.**

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The V.I. Department of Health says there are no confirmed cases of hantavirus in the U.S. Virgin Islands and that the risk to residents and visitors remains very low, even as the department continues monitoring recent hantavirus activity reported outside the territory.

Hantavirus is a rare disease primarily spread through contact with infected rodents or their urine, droppings and saliva. According to the CDC, the overall risk to the general public remains very low.

Health officials said they are tracking updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, federal health partners and international public health agencies. At this time, VIDOH said there is no evidence of community transmission in the territory.

“At this time, there is no threat to the Virgin Islands community,” said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. “There is no evidence of community transmission in the Territory, and the rodents associated with the current outbreak have not been identified in the United States or the U.S. Virgin Islands.”

Out of an abundance of caution, the Department of Health said it has enhanced ongoing infectious disease preparedness coordination with the territory’s hospitals, Emergency Medical Services, territorial laboratories and federal preparedness partners. The department said those efforts are part of its year-round public health preparedness activities designed to ensure readiness for emerging health threats.

Preparedness activities include healthcare coordination, infection prevention planning, training exercises and public health monitoring efforts that strengthen the territory’s ability to respond quickly and effectively if a suspected case ever arises locally, according to VIDOH.

Residents are encouraged to follow routine rodent prevention measures, including sealing openings in homes, properly storing food and safely cleaning areas where rodents may be present.

The Department of Health said it will continue monitoring the situation and provide updates if necessary. Residents are encouraged to rely on official information from VIDOH and the CDC.