



Revised 6-2-2005

Health Officials Investigate Virus Carried by Rodents
Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV)
SAFE PET HANDLING PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Anyone with questions or concerns about human health risks can contact the Department of Health Family Health Line at 1-800-942-7434 during regular business hours. For pet related questions contact the DEM Division of Agriculture at (401)-222-2781.
2. All pet shop, veterinarian, animal control, pest control and public health staff members should educate themselves on the virus and be prepared to answer any questions that come in about pet rodents so they know that mice, hamsters, guinea pigs and all others pet rodents are low risk for LCMV. Please review updated information provided and revised CDC websites.
3. It is unnecessary for animals to be euthanized and tested due to the low risk of contracting LCMV from pet rodents. It is unlikely that animals already in the home will be carrying virus. There is no live animal test available that is reliable. If animals are to be tested, euthanasia is required and is not at all necessary at this time.
4. DEM recommends that pet owners practice safe handling procedures with all pocket pets. Staff should notify pet owners of these recommendations.

Safe Handling Practices

- ✓ Wash your hands after handling or cleaning up after animals.
 - ✓ Do not place food or drink around cages or animal foods.
 - ✓ Supervise and Educate children about safe handling
 - Avoid hand to mouth contact when handling animals
 - ✓ Regular cleaning and care of the cages and materials
 - Use gloves when cleaning cages
 - Do not wash toys, bowls, and cages in kitchen sink or bath tub
 - Disposing of any waste, bedding, or food in the garbage.
5. If necessary, sick animals should be immediately evaluated by a veterinarian. The average mouse, hamster or guinea pig will most likely show no symptoms LCMV. If a pet has symptoms such as poor appetite, weight loss, decreased activity or lethargy; DEM recommends that the animal be evaluated by a veterinarian, as it is more likely to be another illness, other than LCMV.

6. Pocket pets that have shown no signs of illness are low risk for LCMV. The CDC reports that some hamsters can carry the virus for 8 months or longer. Documented literature reports that transmission of the virus to humans is only known to have occurred from hamsters and mice, or organ transplants. Those people with mice, hamsters or guinea pigs that may be concerned about the animals being exposed to LCMV should isolate the animals from pregnant woman or other at risk humans and follow the recommended Safe Handling Practices as a precaution. Safe Handling Practices are always recommended for healthy pets and healthy people.
7. Veterinarians should not euthanize any suspect animals without first contacting the state veterinarian at DEM for instructions.
8. Nuisance mouse control should be done using approved traps and pesticides. Dead mice should be handled with gloves and disposed of in the garbage in plastic bags. If there are any questions on removal of mice consult with a professional pest control company for more information.

Safe Clean up

- ✓ Wear gloves and for heavy infestation respiratory protection and protective clothing recommended
- ✓ Wet down with a light spray any dust or debris in exposed areas.
- ✓ Gently gather material and place in a plastic bag and dispose of in the garbage.
- ✓ Follow by washing the area with a dilute bleach solution or other household disinfectant.

For further information contact:

RIDEM

www.dem.ri.gov/topics/agricult.htm

Health Department

www.HEALTH.ri.gov

Click the IN THE NEWS link

CDC

www.cdc.gov

Click LCMV link

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