

Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis Virus (LCMV)

Introduction

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI) are working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a multi-state investigation of LCMV infections in commercial feeder mice shipped from Indiana breeding facility to distributors, pet stores, and other purchasers in many states, including Alabama. Multiple pet stores in Alabama received mice that may be infected with LCMV from January 2012 to present. These potentially LCMV-infected mice can infect other rodents and can pose a health risk to people who are exposed to them. LCMV infection in people produces symptoms ranging from mild illness to more disease consisting of symptoms of meningitis. Pregnant women and persons who are immunocompromised are at increased risk of infection. Pregnant women may pass infection to the fetus, resulting in birth defects. Immunocompromised persons are also at increased risk for developing severe disease.

CDC Recommendations

Pet store employees and rodent customers who are pregnant women or have a weak immune system should avoid contact with rodents including being in the same room where a rodent lives. See your doctor immediately if you think you are sick with LCMV. If you are pregnant or immunocompromised and may have been exposed to the potentially LCMV-infected mice, please contact the Alabama Department of Public Health at 1-800-338-8374 for more information about testing.

CDC recommends that euthanasia and safe disposal of all potentially LCMV-infected rodents be undertaken. The animals that are potentially infected with LCMV include all rodents originating from the implicated facility in Indiana, and any rodents (mice, hamsters, and/or gerbils) in contact with these mice. State and local health authorities will determine the disposition of animals at locations in the individual states, which have received shipments of potentially LCMV-infected mice.

Groups affected by this outbreak

- Rodent distribution facilities that receive, house, and ship rodents
- Pet stores that receive live rodents and then directly retail to the public
- Zoos, which receive live rodents for feeding to reptiles, raptors, and other animals
- Reptile owners
- Rodent breeders

What is LCMV?

- LCMV is a viral infection in mice, but can also be carried by other rodents such as hamsters, gerbils, and guinea pigs.

How is LCMV spread to humans?

- By handling, touching, breathing, and being around rodent's urine, droppings, saliva and nesting materials (animal bedding).
- The virus is not spread person-to-person.



What are the symptoms of LCMV?

- Infected people will range from no symptoms to mild illness with having symptoms that may include fever, loss of appetite, headache, muscle aches, chills, nausea, vomiting, sore throat, cough, and pain to the joints, chest, testicles, or mouth.
- Some people may develop a more severe form of disease 1 to 2 weeks after the fever starts. This severe form can cause swelling in the brain that may require hospitalization.
- Pregnant woman who gets LCMV can pass the virus to their unborn baby, have a miscarriage, or a baby with severe birth defects.

How is LCMV prevented?

- Take extra precautions when handling pet rodents and their cages and bedding.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water (and watch young children to make sure they wash their hands) after handling animals, cages or bedding.
- Clean rodent cages and bedding often and in a well-ventilated area or outside
- Never kiss pet rodents or hold them close to your face.
- Pregnant women or people with weak immune systems should avoid contact with rodents including being in the same room where a rodent lives.

What should I do if I think I have LCMV?

- See your doctor immediately if you think you are sick with LCMV. Tell your doctor if you have been around any wild mice, feeder mice, or pet rodents.
- Your doctor can decide if you need to be tested and how best to treat your symptoms.

What should I do if I no longer want my pet rodent?

- People who no longer wish to keep their pet rodent should consult a veterinarian.
- Mice, hamsters or other rodents from pet stores should not be returned to the store.
- Do not release the pet rodent into the wild. They may starve or be killed by predators.
- Pet rodents cannot be tested reliably for LCMV without killing the rodent.
- Wear plastic gloves when handling frozen rodents to feed another pet.

I work in a pet store, how do I protect myself?

- Wear a N95mask, gloves, waterproof/washable footwear, and coveralls when working with potentially infected rodents and their cages, and nesting material.
- Disinfect external surfaces of the protective gear and wash your hands with soap and water.
- If colony is not infected with LCMV, wear disposable gloves and wash hands with soap and water after each contact.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in rodent room.

Where can I find more information?

- Go to cdc.gov and type LCMV in SEARCH box.

