

## Hepatitis E

*Hepatitis E is a Class B Disease and must be reported to the state within one business day.*

Hepatitis E is an important medical pathogen in many developing countries, but cases are rarely reported from the United States. Antibody to hepatitis E virus (anti-HEV) is found in less than one percent of U.S. citizens, with most of these cases occurring in city populations. Zoonotic spread of the virus is suspected.

In an attempt to investigate possible modes of transmission for hepatitis E, sera obtained from wild rats trapped in Louisiana were tested for anti-HEV\*. Forty-four percent of the rats captured in Louisiana were seropositive for anti-HEV. The seropositive rats came from both urban and rural areas and the prevalence of anti-HEV IgG increased in parallel with the estimated age of the rats. These findings lead to the speculation that rats may be involved in the puzzlingly high prevalence of anti-HEV among some U.S. city dwellers.

There has been no report of human cases of hepatitis E reported through the Infectious Disease Reportable Information System or through the Louisiana Hospital Inpatient Discharge Data.

\*(Kabrane-Lazizi Y, 1999. Am.J.Trop.Med & Hyg 61:331)