

University burns 2,000 *Tues. 12 Jan 1993 Mainichi Daily News* infected laboratory rats

KYOTO — The medical department of Kyoto University on Monday gassed then burned about 2,000 laboratory rats because many of the rodents were found infected with viruses that can cause a fatal renal disease in humans, according to a university spokesman.

Immediately after finding the virus infection in November 1992, 10 researchers in the department in Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, who came in contact with the infected rats were closely examined. Tests of one of the researchers proved positive to the viruses of "hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome" (HFRS), the spokesman said.

The HFRS viruses reportedly infect humans through rats and then cause acute fever accompanied by internal bleeding and high-protein urine. The viruses cannot be transmitted between humans.

The disease first broke out in Osaka in 1960. Two of the 115 infected died but no such cases have been reported since 1986.

According to the spokesman, inspectors of the department in

mid-November found abnormal symptoms as rough skin among the 30 rats, which were brought into the department's animal experiment facility from the United States by one of its research staff.

Following examinations at an Osaka University medical lab, the HFRS viruses were spotted in three of the rats.

Subsequent sampling tests of other rats belonging to Kyoto University's five lab rooms found that 70.7 percent of them were also infected with the viruses.

Department officials reported the incident to the Education Ministry in late December, after destroying about 300 rats at the five labs. Meanwhile, in-depth investigations on the incident were launched to determine the route of infection.

The department resumed Monday burning the other 2,000 rats. Officials will further disinfect lab rooms and experiment tools for one month, and also provide quarantines to 20 medical researchers and students. During the period, all rat-related experiments in the department will be suspended.