

EPI Update for Friday, August 11, 2006  
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology  
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

*Items for this week's EPI Update include:*

- *Listeria monocytogenes*
- **New Epidemic Intelligence Officer at IDPH**
- **EIS recruiting for 2007**
- **FDA warning issued against use of Bismacine for treatment of Lyme disease**
- **Iowa Disease Surveillance System project update**
- **Meeting announcements**

*Listeria monocytogenes*

A few weeks ago, a California firm recalled hot dogs for possible *Listeria* contamination. People can become ill with listeriosis after consuming food contaminated with the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*, but this is relatively uncommon in healthy humans; in Iowa each year there are typically fewer than five cases of listeriosis reported to the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology. In neonates, elderly, and immuno-compromised patients, listeriosis can cause meningo-encephalitis, resulting in high fever, severe headache, neck stiffness and nausea, and rarely death. This disease can also have serious consequences in pregnant women, resulting in miscarriages and stillbirths. *Listeria monocytogenes* is found in soil and water, and animals can carry the bacterium without appearing ill. Unpasteurized (raw) milk or foods made from unpasteurized milk (e.g., soft cheeses) may contain the bacterium. *Listeria* is killed by pasteurization and cooking; however, in certain ready-to-eat foods, such as hot dogs and deli meats, contamination may occur after cooking. Unlike most other food-borne pathogens, this bacteria is able to grow in refrigerators.

Recommendations for people at risk for listeriosis:

- Do not eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, or deli meats, unless they are reheated until steaming hot.
- Do not eat refrigerated pâtés or meat spreads.
- Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is contained in a cooked dish, such as a casserole.
- Do not drink unpasteurized milk or eat unpasteurized milk products.

- Do not eat soft cheeses such as feta, Brie, and Camembert, blue-veined cheeses, or Mexican-style cheeses, such as queso fresco, unless they are labeled as made from pasteurized milk.

Iowa state law requires all *Listeria* isolates to be sent to the University Hygienic Laboratory for molecular subtyping/”fingerprinting” (PFGE). These patterns are then uploaded into the national PulseNet database which facilitates the comparison of *Listeria* patterns nationally to detect clusters of disease which could aid in the identification of potentially contaminated food products, resulting in removal from grocery store shelves, etc.

### **New Epidemic Intelligence Officer at IDPH**

Deborah Dufficy, a new Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Officer from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has been assigned to the Iowa Department of Public Health, Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE). We are as excited to have her as she is to be here. Deb graduated from Colorado State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine and has been practicing small animal veterinary medicine for most of her career. She worked as an emergency veterinarian, a veterinary laboratory supervisor, and a “Locum tenens” veterinarian. While working as an epidemiologist with the United States Department of Agriculture during the 2003 exotic Newcastle disease poultry outbreak, Deb became interested in public health. She worked on West Nile virus with the Arizona Department of Health Services in 2004 while completing her MPH at the University of Arizona.

### **EIS recruiting for 2007**

The Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS), CDC’s corps of “Disease Detectives,” is a unique two-year, post-graduate program of service and on-the-job training for health professionals interested in the practice of epidemiology. Every year, EIS selects up to 90 talented individuals from around the world for the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the practice of epidemiology at the CDC campuses or in the field at state or local health departments. EIS is often a steppingstone to careers and leadership in public health, but is also useful for health professionals seeking to enhance their skills with a population health perspective. The EIS Program approach of training through service provides officers with unique opportunities, frequently not available in academic training programs, to develop public health skills by addressing real public health problems through the public sector. EIS graduates occupy many leadership positions in CDC and state/local health departments and in academia.

The Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) is now accepting applications for the EIS class beginning July 2007. The deadline for receipt of application materials is Sept. 15. For application information and details about the program, visit [www.cdc.gov/eis](http://www.cdc.gov/eis).

### **FDA warning issued against use of Bismacine for treatment of Lyme disease**

On July 21, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a press release to warn consumers and health care providers to NOT use a product known as “Bismacine” (also known as chromacine) to treat Lyme disease. Recently there have been several reports of persons receiving injections of Bismacine, especially for treatment of Lyme disease. The FDA is currently investigating reports of several injuries and one death related to Bismacine injections. “Bismacine” contains high amounts of bismuth, which is a heavy metal. Bismuth is not approved for administration by injection.

Adverse effects from Bismacine injections include heart failure and kidney failure. Adverse reactions experienced with the use of this product should be reported to the FDA's MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online at [www.fda.gov/MedWatch/report.htm](http://www.fda.gov/MedWatch/report.htm), by phone (1-800-FDA-1088), or by returning the postage-paid FDA form 3500, which may be downloaded from [www.fda.gov/MedWatch/getforms.htm](http://www.fda.gov/MedWatch/getforms.htm), by mail to MedWatch, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852-9787 or fax (1-800-FDA-0178). The FDA press release is available at [www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2006/NEW01415.html](http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2006/NEW01415.html).

### **Iowa Disease Surveillance System project update**

The IDSS system is a tool to be developed to modernize and streamline disease reporting by allowing secure, electronic web-based reporting. This will not change underlying epidemiologic methods or the existing list of reportable diseases in Iowa. The IDSS system will make reporting easier for health care professionals and facilitate better communication in a safe, secure manner. IDPH anticipates that the pilot phase will be kicked off around the middle of October at select sites across the state. IDPH has contracted with the Iowa Foundation for Medical Care (IFMC) for development of IDSS.

### **Meeting announcements:**

#### **SAVE THE DATE: Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology Fall Update dates:**

- Sept. 8 (full day) Sept. 15 (half day) is Region 5 in Ottumwa
- Sept. 20 and 21 is Region 3 in Cherokee
- Oct. 3 and 4 is Region 1 in Marshalltown
- Oct. 17 and 18 is Region 4 in Creston
- Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 is Region 6 at Kirkwood
- Nov. 13th and 14 is Region 2 in Mason City

The intended audience includes public health nurses, infection control practitioners, and school nurses for the first, full day and long term care health care workers for the second, half day. CEU's will be offered.

Registration information will be posted soon at [www.idph.state.ia.us/conferences.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/conferences.asp).

**Have a healthy and happy week!**

**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology  
Iowa Department of Public Health  
800-362-2736**