# EPI Update for Friday, June 15, 2012 Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) lowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

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

- Falls prevention
- Rabies update
- West Nile virus surveillance begins
- Meeting announcements and training opportunities

## Falls prevention

Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injury and death in Iowa adults age 65 and older. Across all age groups, slipping or tripping falls are the most common type. The cost of hospitalization care in Iowa for falls is approximately \$92 million annually and the total charges for emergency visits in Iowa due to falls are approximately \$35 million per year.

Please screen older adults for fall risk during routine medical exams to help educate older patients about safety. Also, please remind patients to take the following actions:

- Take their time get out of chairs slowly. Sit for a moment before getting out of bed.
- Wear sturdy, well-fitting shoes with low heels and non-slip soles.
- See an eye specialist once a year. Poor vision can increase their chances of falling.
- Be aware that some medications have side effects that can cause dizziness.
- Increase physical activity regular exercise increases balance and strength.

Follow these tips to make living areas safer and help reduce the risk of falls:

- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Have grab bars installed next to the toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Have handrails on both sides of stairways.
- Improve lighting in the entire home.

For more information about falls prevention, visit <a href="www.idph.state.ia.us/FallsPrevention">www.idph.state.ia.us/FallsPrevention</a>. For information about the lowa Healthy Links falls prevention program, Matter of Balance, visit <a href="www.iowahealthylinks.org/about.html">www.iowahealthylinks.org/about.html</a>.

#### **Rabies Update**

So far this year, nine animals have tested positive for rabies (four cows, two skunks, two bats, and one cat). The actual number of rabid animals in our state is likely much higher; the nine positive tests so far this year only represent wild or domestic animals that had contact with humans and were available for testing.

Although there has not been a human rabies case in Iowa since 2002, it is important to remind patients to take the following measures to prevent exposure to potentially rabid animals:

- Vaccinate all pets against rabies.
- Do not feed or handle wild or stray animals. Avoid sick animals or those that act strangely.
- Do not keep any wild animals as pets, which is often illegal as well as dangerous.
  Special licenses are needed in Iowa to keep wild animals.
- Cover garbage cans and keep pet food indoors, so wild animals are not attracted.

Rabies is spread through a bite or when saliva or brain and spinal cord (neural) tissue from an animal with rabies gets into any, wound, open skin, eyes, nose, or mouth. Bats pose a different problem. The bite of a bat can be so small that it may not be seen. People found in rooms with bats, who are unable to state, "I know I was not bitten," should be considered potentially exposed; for example, persons that awaken to find a bat in the room or children alone with a bat in a room should be considered exposed to rabies.

IDPH provides consultation to help health care providers, veterinarians, and the general public to determine whether a potential exposure occurred (CADE provided over 600 consultations last year).

- During business hours, call (800) 362-2736
- After hours, call (515) 323-4360 (the lowa State Patrol will contact the person on call)

Rabies resources are available at:

www.idph.state.ia.us/CADE/DiseaseIndex.aspx?disease=Rabies.

#### **West Nile virus surveillance begins**

In a joint effort with the State Hygienic Laboratory, the Iowa State University Department of Entomology, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and several local health departments, the Iowa Department of Public Health monitors West Nile virus activity in sentinel chickens, mosquitoes, horses, and humans.

West Nile virus is endemic in Iowa and activity usually peaks in late summer and early fall. Surveillance for *Culex pipiens* and *Culex tarsalis* mosquitoes (the primary carriers of WNV) and chickens began this week, and will continue in Iowa throughout the season.

For additional information and resources about West Nile virus, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/DiseaseIndex.aspx?disease=West Nile Virus.

# **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**None

Have a healthy and happy week! Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology lowa Department of Public Health 800-362-2736