

EPI Update for Friday, January 27, 2006

Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology

Iowa Department of Public Health

Items for this week's EPI update

- Rabies update: recent case in an Iowa dairy cow
- Influenza update
- Avian influenza update
- Not-so-hot bacteria in hot tubs
- Iowa respiratory pathogens incidence posted on UHL Web site
- Meeting announcements

Rabies Update

Iowa has had two cases of rabies reported in animals already this year. The first was in a horse from Story County, and the second was in a dairy cow from Washington County. The most likely hypothesis is that each animal had been bitten by a rabid skunk 30 to 45 days prior to the onset of clinical signs. The owners and attending veterinarians for each animal suspected rabies immediately and were able to minimize human exposures.

The case involving the dairy cow was complicated by the fact that the cow's milk was consumed without being pasteurized. Dr. David Schlapkohl, the attending veterinarian for the rabid dairy cow, contacted Dr. Susan Brockus at CADE for rabies exposure assessment. Since the owners did not have a phone, Dr. Schlapkohl graciously facilitated communication throughout the incident (many, many thanks to Dr. Schlapkohl!). An interview with the family confirmed that no family member had been bitten by the dairy cow. Furthermore, family members had had minimal saliva contact and/or had only saliva contact to intact skin. Thus, no typical rabies exposures occurred.

Milk is not known to carry the rabies virus, and in normal circumstances, even if it were, pasteurization would kill the virus if present. In this case though, there was some concern since the family members had drunk this cow's unpasteurized milk. However, since milk has never been known to transmit rabies, it was not considered a potential exposure and rabies prophylaxis was not recommended.

Influenza Update

Seasonal Influenza: Iowa and the United States

Iowa is still experiencing regional levels of influenza activity. Overall cases of influenza continue to increase.

Several schools in Polk and Benton Counties have reported rates of student absenteeism greater than 10 percent, indicating outbreaks of flu. Sentinel providers, schools, child care and long-term care are remaining at rates consistent with the previous two weeks, indicating continuing low levels of flu activity.

For more information on the Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network or to view the flu activity map, visit our Web site at www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu.asp.

Avian influenza

Avian influenza activity has slowed in Turkey, with several cases still in the process of being confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO). Recent activity continues in China, though overall rates of human infection are not increasing. As of Jan. 25, 152 human cases and 83 deaths have been reported by WHO.

Pandemic influenza planning efforts

On Feb. 3, Gov. Tom Vilsack and Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson will welcome U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt to Des Moines for Iowa's Pandemic Influenza Planning and Response Summit. Other national, state and local leaders will join them to discuss this important topic. The summit is an invitation-only event intended for leaders in public health, health care, emergency management, public safety, business and industry, state and local governments, communications, education, agriculture, faith-based organizations and the news media. We will update you after the summit.

Not-so-hot bacteria in hot tubs

CADE recently fielded a call from a physician reporting a case of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* folliculitis in a patient who attributed his exposure to a hotel hot tub. Hot tubs, designed for recreational and many times therapeutic use provide an ideal environment for the pesky *Pseudomonas* bacteria, because it likes the wet and warm atmosphere. It is able to withstand temperatures up to 41 degrees and chlorine often does not adequately disinfect the water. Not only can *Pseudomonas* be found in hot tubs, but is often present in soil, sinks, drains, shower floors, carpeting and even tap water. In healthy persons, the initial infection occurs as an itchy, bumpy, red rash appearing within two days of hot tub exposure. The bumps can develop into dark red, raised bumps or pus-filled blisters. Muscle aches, headache, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, sore eyes, sore throat and/or fever may accompany the rash. An infection in an immune compromised individual could cause severe septicemia. In most cases the infection is self-limiting and is resolved in 7-10 days without specific treatment. Careful attention to controlling the pH and chlorine content of hot tubs may help prevent hot tub folliculitis.

Is *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* folliculitis a reportable disease to IDPH? Individual cases are not specifically reportable but can be especially if a public health response is indicated. Outbreaks are reportable, thus ensuring implementation of prevention and control measures.

Iowa respiratory pathogens incidence posted on UHL Web site

Are you interested in knowing what respiratory pathogens University Hygienic Lab (UHL) is detecting? Thanks to your suggestions, the UHL Web site has been expanded. On the Seasonal Influenza page, you are now able to select "Influenza, Other Respiratory Viruses and Pertussis" to view data for the past 30 days, this calendar year, or the past calendar year. When selecting "Influenza Virus" data, click on the county for information on which hemagglutinin (H) type of flu has been detected. On the "Other Respiratory Viruses" screen, click on the county to learn about the occurrence of adenovirus, parainfluenza virus, rhinovirus and respiratory syncytial virus. The third choice is "Pertussis." Here information occurrence by county is available (when the county of residence for the patient is known).

Meeting announcements:

An Iowa Communications Network (ICN) seminar titled, "Pandemic Flu Planning: Expectations for Locals" will be held on Feb. 1 from 11:00 a.m. to noon. The target audience for this ICN seminar is professionals in local public health, health care and emergency management. The program flier, ICN sites and registration instructions will be posted at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu_pandemic_professional.asp. PowerPoint materials will be posted on Jan. 30. Registration is encouraged (but not required) by going to www.prepareiowa.com. For general program questions, please contact DeAnne Sesker at deanne.sesker@idph.state.ia.us.

Have a Healthy and Happy Week
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