

Epi Update for Friday, May 10, 2024

CENTER FOR ACUTE DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY (CADE)

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Items for this week's Epi Update include

- Iowa HHS, SHL request influenza specimens to monitor for novel influenza during off-season
- Charcuterie food safety
- Infographic: Food safety stats
- Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Iowa HHS, SHL request influenza specimens to monitor for novel influenza during off-season

Every year after influenza activity decreases to interseasonal levels, Iowa HHS and SHL ask laboratories to continue sending influenza specimens for further testing to help detect novel influenza (e.g., swine or avian) variants. Given the recent occurrences of avian influenza among dairy cattle, maintaining our capacity to detect any novel influenza viruses circulating in Iowa is more crucial than ever.

In early April, a person in the U.S. tested positive for HPAI (influenza A/H5N1) virus following exposure to a dairy cattle herd in Texas infected with HPAI. The patient reported eye redness (consistent with conjunctivitis) as their only symptom and has recovered. This infection does not change the HPAI human health risk assessment for the public, which CDC considers to be low. However, people with close or prolonged unprotected exposure to infected birds or other animals (including livestock), or to environments contaminated by infected birds or other animals (such as farmers, poultry workers, backyard flock owners, or animal hobbyists), are at greater risk of infection.

CDC is working with state and local health departments to continue to monitor workers who may have been in contact with infected or potentially infected animals and test those people who develop symptoms. In addition, public health networks are leveraging influenza surveillance techniques to look for unusual patterns in circulation during the off-season, such as localized increases in activity.

Iowa HHS and SHL are asking for your assistance to monitor Iowans during the summer and fall for influenza symptoms, especially among those with animal contact. If a patient has conjunctivitis and/or influenza-like symptoms and has a high-risk exposure (e.g., exposed to birds or animals infected with HPAI), health care providers should contact Iowa HHS and discuss testing for influenza. Laboratories who detect a positive influenza specimen during the off-season from a patient with animal contact should send it to SHL for subtyping. Testing for suspect influenza AH5N1 cases at SHL will include real-time RT-PCR screening for influenza A/H5, current seasonal circulating influenza A genotypes, and influenza B. Any specimen that tests positive for influenza A/H5 at SHL will be sent to CDC for confirmatory testing.

For the latest information about HPA in dairy cows, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/mammals.htm.

Charcuterie food safety

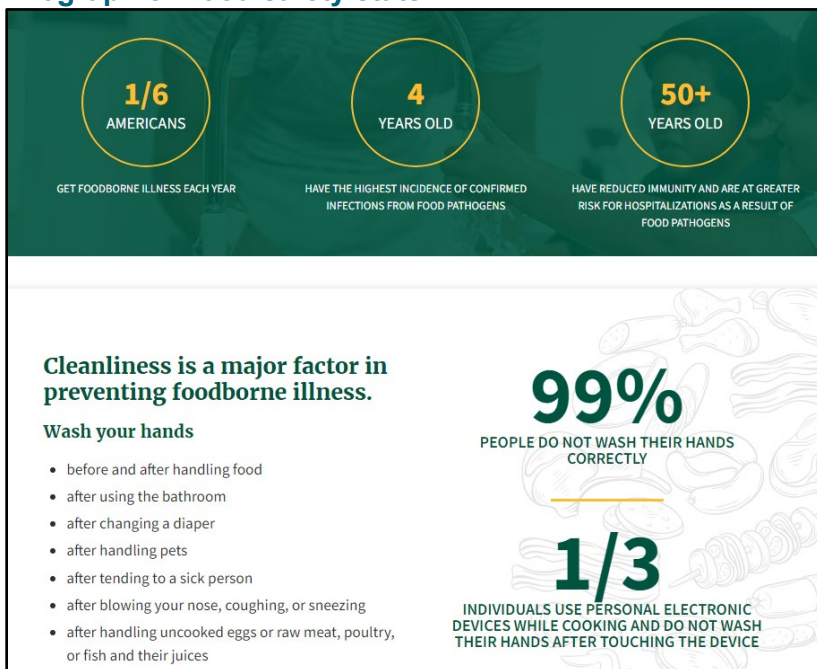
With the popularity of charcuterie boards and trays on the rise, keep in mind some important food safety considerations when serving these foods. For example, *Listeria* is a potential risk when consuming deli meats and some cheese, which can be particularly dangerous to pregnant women, young children and the elderly. In addition, a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* was linked to ready-to-eat charcuterie meat products in January, prompting a recall.

Here are some tips to safely enjoying charcuterie:

- Start with clean hands and utensils when preparing your charcuterie board.
- Serves cheeses carefully that are made using pasteurized milk.
- Check expiration dates and discard expired foods.
- Keep your charcuterie items refrigerated right up until serving.
- Replenish your board as items are eaten instead of allowing meats and cheeses to sit unrefrigerated.
- Discard all perishable foods that sit out longer than two hours.

For more information, including a link to details about the recalled products, visit www.aphlblog.org/is-that-salami-safe-charcuterie-recalls-and-consumer-safety-tips/.

Infographic: Food safety stats



To view in full size, visit www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Join the Iowa HHS Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Program on Tuesday, May 20 at 12 noon for a free webinar, *Reassessing Penicillin Allergy: Ensuring Safe and Effective Antibiotic Treatment*. Participants will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to address and mitigate the consequences of inaccurate penicillin allergy reporting. By the end of this course, participants will emerge with a heightened understanding of the complexities surrounding penicillin allergy mislabeling and the strategies necessary to ensure safe and effective antibiotic treatment for all patients. At the conclusion of this webinar, the participants should be better able to: discuss penicillin allergy mislabeling in patients that present to the dental clinic, identify potential consequences of antibiotic treatment in a patient who reports penicillin allergy, and review resources and tools for identifying and facilitating a penicillin allergy reassessment. Continuing education credits are available. To register, visit www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_XORkJXh8TOanmaaChsnTUg#/registration.

Have a healthy and happy week!
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology
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