

The Pump Handle



"I had an interview with the Board of Guardians of St. James's parish, on the evening of Thursday, 7th September, and represented the above circumstances to them. In consequence of what I said, the handle of the pump was removed on the following day."

John Snow, 1855

December 2006 Topics

- Influenza Update
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Influenza Update

As of Dec. 26, 2006, 27 laboratory-identified influenza cases have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH). The counties with reported influenza activity include Barnes, Burleigh, Cass, Cavalier, Dickey, Grand Forks, Grant, LaMoure, Mercer, Richland, Rolette, Steele, Traill, Ward and Williams.

Of the 27 reported cases, 81 percent (22) were identified as type A, 15 percent (4) as type B and 4 percent (1) as unknown type. Influenza viral isolation is an important part of influenza surveillance. It helps identify what strains are circulating in communities, can identify novel influenza viruses and aids in vaccine strain selection. If a patient tests positive via a rapid test, the NDDoH encourages the collection of an additional influenza specimen to be submitted to the NDDoH Division of Laboratory Services for viral isolation. Call the NDDoH at 800.472.2180 for consultation on specimen submission. Free testing will be provided until influenza is characterized in your community.

No influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported to the NDDoH so far this season. Pediatric influenza-associated mortality was made a mandatory reportable condition to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2004. For more information about influenza-associated pediatric mortality, visit www.ndflu.com/Surveillance/Surveillance.aspx

For more information about influenza or to order free educational materials, visit the NDDoH influenza website at www.ndflu.com.



Viral Gastroenteritis Outbreaks Update

Since October 2006, 20 outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis have been reported to the NDDoH from 12 counties, including Barnes, Cass, Foster, Grand Forks, Griggs, McHenry, McLean, Nelson, Stark, Stutsman, Walsh and Ward. Fourteen long-term care facilities (nursing homes), two assisted-living homes, two basic-care facilities and one developmental-care facility have been affected. One foodborne outbreak occurred at a restaurant associated with an ill food handler who also worked at the local nursing home where residents and staff had previously been reported ill.

More than 300 residents and more than 150 staff were ill at the time the outbreaks were reported. Twelve of 15 total stool specimens collected from nine facilities reporting outbreaks tested positive for norovirus.

A viral gastroenteritis outbreak is defined as two or more people associated with a common venue having vomiting and/or diarrhea lasting 24 to 48 hours. To report a viral gastroenteritis outbreak, visit www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Gastroenteritis/ or call Disease Control at 800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.



Multi-State *E. coli* Outbreaks: Possible Lettuce Contamination

In November and December 2006, two *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks occurred involving two fast food chains: Taco Bell restaurants in five states on the east coast and Taco Johns restaurants in southern Minnesota and Cedar Falls, Iowa. Evaluation of data by state and federal public health experts determined shredded lettuce as the most likely source of both outbreaks. Trace back of the implicated lettuce in both outbreaks is still underway by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to find out what may have caused the outbreaks. Both outbreaks are associated with lettuce, but not to each other. DNA of *E. coli* isolated from each of the outbreaks was tested and found to be different from one another, indicating the source of contamination of the lettuce was probably different as well.

North Dakota has had zero cases of *E. coli* associated with Taco Bell, Taco Johns or any fast food restaurant.

More information about *E. coli* and the multi-state outbreak investigations is available at www.ndhealth.gov/Disease/Documents/faqs/E%20coli.pdf and www.cdc.gov/.



Raccoons and Rabies Prophylaxis

According to the CDC, raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) are the most commonly identified wild animal with rabies in the United States. ([Click here to see graph.](#)) Raccoon rabies is restricted geographically mostly in the mid-Atlantic and eastern coastal states. ([Click here to see map.](#))

In North Dakota, the skunk is the most common wild animal identified with rabies. However, in the past 10 years, six raccoons in North Dakota have tested positive for rabies; therefore, people coming into contact with raccoons in North Dakota also are considered high risk for potential human exposure to rabies. To help protect people from exposure to the deadly rabies virus and avoid undergoing expensive rabies vaccination, Title 36 of the Century Code (www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t36c01.pdf) prohibits ownership of skunks and raccoons in the

state of North Dakota. Nevertheless, several potential human rabies exposures are investigated by the NDDoH each year due to people harboring raccoons as pets. Two instances of possible human rabies exposure to raccoons in 2006 are described:

- A veterinarian had been leaving food out for a pair of raccoons in the backyard of the veterinary practice. A 4-year-old child in the neighborhood came in contact with the raccoons and was scratched multiple times and possibly bitten. Two raccoons were trapped, euthanized and sent to the NDDoH Division of Laboratory Services for rabies testing. Although both raccoons tested negative, the child completed the rabies vaccination series because health officials could not be entirely confident that the raccoons trapped and tested were the same animals that scratched and bit the child.
- The North Dakota State Veterinarian notified Disease Control that a child had been bitten by a raccoon. That raccoon and another were being kept by a couple living in Pierce County, N.D. The couple denied having the raccoons. The State Veterinarian faxed a letter to the Pierce County State's Attorney's office indicating that the raccoons could be confiscated on behalf of the state vet's office. The State's Attorney began the proceedings for a search warrant to confiscate the raccoons. Eventually, the couple surrendered the animals. The raccoons tested negative for rabies.

For more information about animal rabies in North Dakota, visit www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Rabies/.



Hepatitis C Training Workshop, Bismarck, N.D.

On April 20, 2007, the North Dakota Department of Health, in collaboration with the Hepatitis C Support Project, is sponsoring a one-day hepatitis C training workshop in Bismarck, N.D. Topics include epidemiology, diagnostics and treatment.

There is no fee to attend, and a limited number of travel scholarships are available. Training is limited to 50 individuals. Early registration is available online at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/Hepatitis/Training/Hepc.htm. For more information, call Kim Weis or Tracy Miller at 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180.

Contributing authors of The Pump Handle include Michelle Feist, Erin Fox, Kimberly Weis, Julie Goplin, Tracy Miller and Kirby Kruger. For questions, suggestions or inquiries, or to be removed from the mailing list, please contact Julie Goplin of the Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2375 or by email at jgoplin@nd.gov.

The pump handle picture in the title was obtained from the website www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow.html.



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