

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

July 2005 Topics

- West Nile Virus Update
- Anthrax Alert for Livestock Owners
- Turtle-Associated Salmonellosis
- New Program Managers Announcement



West Nile Virus (WNV) Update

As of July 22, 2005, 10 dead birds and 25 horse samples have been submitted for testing to the North Dakota Department of Health, with one horse and three dead birds testing positive for WNV. An additional 78 dead birds from across the state have been reported online. Four hundred and ninety-two sentinel chicken serums have been tested, with six positive samples identified.

Three hundred and forty humans have been tested at the Division of Microbiology. There have been two positive human cases reported in North Dakota as of June 22, 2005.

Counties reporting positive activity include:

- Burleigh – 1 horse, 1 dead bird
- Cass – 2 dead birds
- Grand Forks – 1 chicken
- Mountrail – 1 human
- Ramsey – 1 chicken
- Stutsman – 1 human, 3 chickens
- Ward – 1 chicken

For more information about WNV, visit the health department website at www.ndwnv.com.



Anthrax Alert for Livestock Owners

As of Aug. 11, 2005, more than 80 cases of anthrax in cattle in eastern North Dakota have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Agriculture. No human cases have been reported. North Dakota cases of anthrax in cattle can be viewed at www.agdepartment.com/Programs/Livestock/BOAH/2005Anthrax.pdf.

The risk of transmission of anthrax from animals to people is low; however, precautions should be taken to prevent anthrax infection in people who work with livestock. These include:

- Minimize direct contact with sick or dead animals.
- Wear rubber boots and gloves when handling animals or carcasses.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
- Wash and disinfect rubber gloves and boots when finished.
- Wash hands and exposed skin with soap and running water.
- Burn dead animals on site.

A fact sheet with information about exposure to anthrax-infected livestock is available on the North Dakota Department of Health website at www.ndhealth.gov/disease.

Guidance for health-care providers concerning anthrax can be accessed at www.ndhan.gov/.



Turtle-Associated Salmonellosis

A 10-year old girl received medical attention after experiencing symptoms of nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting and diarrhea in early July. The patient had a history of multiple urinary tract infections occurring throughout the month of June. *Salmonella* Enteritidis was isolated from the girl's urine and stool. The father also experienced diarrhea in early July and tested positive for *Salmonella* Enteritidis as well.

After ruling out possible foodborne exposures during the disease investigation, it was determined likely that two pet turtles the family owned may be the source of salmonella infection in this family. The family claimed to have purchased the set of turtles in early June via a website, where the online vendor claims their turtles are salmonella-free. Stool samples from each turtle and a water sample from the shared tank were sent to the Division of Microbiology for salmonella testing. The turtle water tested positive for *Salmonella* Enteritidis. The turtles are likely to have caused the salmonella infections in this family.

Despite the health risks, turtles have become very popular pets in recent years. *Salmonella* are naturally occurring bacteria in turtles and those with salmonella do not appear sick. In addition, turtles shed salmonella intermittently. Therefore, a turtle that tests negative for salmonella once does not mean they are not infected or colonized.

People at increased risk for infection or serious complications from salmonellosis include children younger than five, the elderly, pregnant women and anyone with a weakened immune system. These high-risk individuals should not have contact with turtles and should avoid keeping them as pets.

Turtle-associated salmonellosis can be prevented by careful hand-washing after handling turtles or their cages and feces, washing surfaces that the turtle or cage has come in contact with using a disinfecting bleach solution and separating the turtle from possible contact with food.

For more information about turtles and salmonellosis, visit www.cdc.gov/healthypets.



New Program Managers Announcement

The North Dakota Department of Health Division of Disease Control has named Kimberly Weis as the new program manager for the Sexually Transmitted Disease and Hepatitis Program and Melissa Casteel as the new program manager for the HIV/AIDS/TB Program. Congratulations!

Contact Kim or Melissa by calling 701.328.2378 or toll free (North Dakota residents only) at 800.472.2180.

Contributing authors of The Pump Handle include 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 701.238.2375 or by email at jgoplin@state.nd.us.

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



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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