

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

June 2006 Topics

- West Nile Virus Update
- Monkey Bite Prompts Rabies Vaccination
- Unsung Hero
- Norovirus Associated With Catered Events
- NDDoH Disease Fact Sheets 



West Nile Virus Update

Seven dead birds and three horse samples have been submitted to the NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for West Nile virus testing as of June 23, 2006. One dead bird from Cass County and one horse from Burleigh County have tested positive for WNV. In addition, 194 sentinel chicken serums have been tested, with three positives identified; one in Ramsey County and two in Grand Forks County. More than 120 dead birds from across the state have been reported online. Thirteen humans have been tested for WNV at the Division of Microbiology. North Dakota has no reports of human West Nile virus infection as of June 23, 2006.

In the United States, as of June 13, 2006, four human West Nile virus cases have been reported to the CDC from Colorado (1), Mississippi (1) and Texas (2). Visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm for nation-wide WNV data.

For more information about WNV, visit the North Dakota Department of Health website at www.ndwnv.com/.



Monkey Bite Prompts Rabies Vaccination

A Cass County resident was bitten on the finger while holding a monkey during a television broadcast. The monkey was owned by a traveling entertainer who was performing an animal show at a local event.

The monkey's owner was able to produce health records on the animal. However, because there is not an approved rabies vaccine for monkeys, it was recommended that the exposed person receive rabies post-exposure prophylaxis. The individual agreed to begin the rabies post-exposure prophylaxis series and the animal was quarantined for the duration of its stay in North Dakota.

Challenges approached by local and state health departments during this situation include:

- 1) Defining a provoked vs. unprovoked bite considering involvement of a trained wild animal.
- 2) Health records were available, but the rabies vaccination history technically was invalid since there is not an approved rabies vaccine for monkeys.
- 3) Finding a local veterinarian experienced in evaluating the health status of a monkey.
- 4) Involving the local police with isolating the animal pending evaluation by a veterinarian when distinction of time for isolation was unclear.
- 5) Lack of data regarding the period of viral shedding in primates.

Two key elements highlighted during this incident were the importance of educating city event planners, animal trainers and the public about health requirements for animals imported across state lines and the risks involved when allowing the public to handle these animals.



Unsung Hero

A pet dog was handed an unfortunate fate after saving a young child from being viciously attacked by a rabid skunk in north central North Dakota. The skunk charged the child who was playing on a backyard swing set. The family dog pulled the skunk off the child on two occasions before an adult came on the scene. No major injuries were inflicted on the child, and post-exposure rabies prophylaxis was initiated. The skunk tested positive for rabies at the Division of Microbiology.

The dog previously had not been vaccinated for rabies. Because of the exposure to a rabid, wild animal and for the safety of the family, the dog was put down. Had the dog been vaccinated appropriately, it could have received a rabies booster and been monitored for 45 days.

This incident outlines the importance of vaccinating pets for rabies. Puppies can be vaccinated as early as three months old. One rabies booster given every three years may save a pet's life.

Information about what pet owners should know about vaccinating their pets against rabies can be found on the Division of Disease Control rabies website at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Rabies/default.htm.



Norovirus Associated With Catered Events

Thirty-six people ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea were reported to the NDDoH between June 2 and June 7. All of the cases were associated with eating at various catered events in one central North Dakota city. One local restaurant catered the food to all implicated events.

Five stool specimens were collected from ill individuals and tested positive for norovirus.

Eight food workers at the restaurant were reported to be ill during the same week. Chopped fresh fruit was the probable source of contamination. The fruit was prepared by one of the sick food workers who reported being symptomatic when working. The fruit from this batch was distributed to the different catered events around town and served on buffet lines at the restaurant.

Commonly associated with winter months, norovirus is sometimes referred to as the “winter vomiting disease,” but it can occur year round. First reported in Denmark in 1935, the virus is now known to cause more than 50 percent of foodborne outbreaks in the United States. A major contributing factor in norovirus outbreaks are the food workers. Food workers can spread the virus in food and water even if they are not symptomatic because the virus can be shed in the stool for several days after diarrhea resolves. Excluding ill food workers from work while they are symptomatic and proper hand washing are key in preventing foodborne illnesses.



NDDoH Disease Fact Sheets

Disease fact sheets are now available on the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) Division of Disease Control website at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/. On the right side of the screen, under “Frequently Requested,” click the “Disease Fact Sheets” link. All disease fact sheets available at this time are listed alphabetically and ready to print. For questions about NDDoH disease fact sheets, contact the Division of Disease Control at 1.800.472.2180.

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 701.328.2375 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
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