



Epi Update for Friday, March 4, 2022

**Office of the Public Health Medical Director
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis**

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's Epi Update include:

- **Highly pathogenic avian influenza identified in Iowa**
- **Rising incidence of Legionnaires' disease in Iowa and the US, 1992-2018**
- **Syphilis surge continues, disparities persist**
- **In the news: Global health champion Paul Farmer dies at 62**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza identified in Iowa

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have confirmed a positive case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Pottawattamie County. The virus was found in a non-commercial, backyard poultry flock.

HPAI is highly contagious, viral disease affecting bird populations. HPAI can travel in wild birds without those birds appearing sick, but is often fatal to domestic bird populations, including chickens and turkeys. The virus can spread through droppings or nasal discharge of an infected bird, which can contaminate dust and soil.

The designation of HPAI has no correlation to whether the virus causes illness in humans. The recent HPAI detections in birds do not present an immediate public health concern. No human cases of these avian influenza viruses have been detected in the U.S. It remains safe to eat poultry products. As a reminder, the proper handling and cooking of poultry and eggs to an internal temperature of 165 °F kills bacteria and viruses.

All bird owners, whether commercial producers or backyard flock owners, should practice good biosecurity, prevent contact between their birds and wild birds, and report sick birds or unusual deaths to state/federal officials. Biosecurity resources and best practices are available at <http://iowaagriculture.gov/biosecurity>.

If producers suspect signs of HPAI in their flocks, they should contact their veterinarian immediately. Possible cases should also be reported to the Iowa Department of Agriculture at (515) 281-5305.

For updates on this developing situation, please visit <https://iowaagriculture.gov/animal-industry-bureau/avian-influenza>.

Rising incidence of Legionnaires' disease in Iowa and the US, 1992-2018

CDC recently released a summary of trends in Legionnaires' disease (LD) in the U.S from 1992 to 2018. After remaining relatively stable from 1992 to 2002, the age-standardized incidence increased by an average of 9.3% per year from 2002 to 2018. Cases of legionellosis in Iowa (includes Pontiac fever as well as Legionnaires' disease) have also increased considerably during this time period, from three cases in 2002 to 35 in 2017.

The increase could partially be due to changes in surveillance, such as increased testing, provider awareness, and improved reporting. The increase should serve as a reminder for clinicians to consider LD among patients with community acquired pneumonia, especially if travel, warmer weather, and risk factors such as age are involved.

To view the full summary, visit wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/28/3/21-1435_article.

Syphilis surge continues, disparities persist

The number of syphilis diagnoses in Iowa is continuing to surge. Provisional 2021 data indicate a nearly 60% increase in infectious syphilis cases compared to the previous year. The infection is affecting a wider range of populations and geographic areas than the past.

Historically, syphilis has been concentrated in more urban areas of the state and largely among men. The number of diagnoses among women doubled within a year. Increasingly, rural counties are affected. And although the majority of cases (64%) are among white, non-Hispanic persons, rates among Black, Indigenous, and other persons of color are rapidly increasing and disproportionately high. Early 2022 data indicate these trends are continuing. Recent increases are being observed in northwest Iowa and among Indigenous communities. These trends highlight the effects of social determinants of health upon disease transmission.

Providers should continue to be vigilant in looking for syphilitic signs and symptoms among their patients. Additionally, broader testing is encouraged, as there are increasing reports of atypical presentations of syphilis and less noticeable symptoms. Early diagnosis and treatment greatly reduces the likelihood of complications and lessens community transmission.

Please contact George Walton, STD Program Manager, for additional information at George.Walton@idph.iowa.gov or (515) 240-1143.

Complete STI treatment guidelines can be found at www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/default.htm.

In the news: Global health champion Paul Farmer dies at 62

www.npr.org/2022/02/21/1082183207/global-health-champion-paul-farmer-dies-at-62

Have a healthy and happy week!

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