

## SLCHD EPIDEMIOLOGY PAGES

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### FALL (AUG—OCT) 2006; VOLUME II

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The St. Lucie County Health Department 's Epidemiology programs are on the front lines of disease control and prevention through the use of surveillance techniques and the analysis of communicable and environmental disease information. It is the charge of this department to investigate reported cases of all communicable diseases and/or disease clusters by addressing the persistent threat of all communicable diseases to all residents, regardless of age, gender, lifestyle, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status.

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#### COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SPOTLIGHT

WRITTEN BY: CHARISMA ATKINS, EPIDEMIOLOGIST

#### RABIES PREVENTION

Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain and nervous system. It is transmitted from animal to animal and from animal to human. If left untreated in humans and animals, rabies is fatal. Exposure to the rabies virus can be the result of a bite or non-bite by animals known to carry the disease. The most common carriers are bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and unvaccinated cats and dogs. Therefore, it is necessary to (1) provide your animals with their necessary rabies vaccinations and (2) complete the full rabies prophylaxis treatment if bitten.

There are two forms of rabies prevention. Pre-exposure is given to protect people who might come into future contact with rabies, such as international travelers and veterinarians. Pre-exposure treatment does not eliminate the need for prompt treatment following an exposure to rabies, however

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### Communicable Disease Spotlight Continued from Page 1:

it should not be given when one is ill with a fever. The rabies vaccine is usually administered in the upper arm. Common reactions people experience when receiving the vaccinations are pain, redness, swelling, and itching. Post-exposure treatment is given to those individuals who have been exposed to the rabies virus. If someone is scratched or bitten by a possible animal containing the rabies virus, then post-exposure is needed. For most people, this consists of a series of rabies vaccinations, plus a dose of the rabies immune globulin. The immune globulin is used to provide immediate protection against rabies and it should always be given with the rabies vaccine. Adverse reactions to this treatment include tenderness, pain, soreness, and muscle stiffness at the injection site. If someone was previously vaccinated, but has been recently exposed to the rabies virus; then they may not need the full post-exposure treatment. However, they will require two additional rabies vaccinations to ensure full protection against the virus. Post-exposure should begin immediately after one has been exposed to the virus, preferably before symptoms begin to appear. Common symptoms include apprehension, headache, fever, and excitability.

The disease may progress to paralysis, muscle spasms, convulsions, and eventually death if left untreated. Diagnosis is made through the staining of brain tissue and usually occurs in animals after death. Presumptive diagnosis occurs by staining skin sections taken from the back of the neck at the hairline. Due to the fatality of this disease, Rabies has been placed on the List of Reportable Conditions as a illness that should be reported when there is suspicion of a case. This ultimately means that once a physician or medical care provider suspects a case of Rabies, it is their responsibility to report it to the health department as soon as possible. For further information on Rabies, please refer to <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/rabies/rabies-index.html>.

## **RABIES PREVENTION TIPS**

- Vaccinate all of your dogs, cats, ferrets, and horses against rabies.
- Receive a Rabies Vaccine if you come in contact with animals that may carry the rabies virus.
- Obtain the Rabies Vaccine if you plan to travel to countries where the rabies virus is widespread.
- Avoid contact with wild or stray animals.
- **Always receive treatment if you come into contact with a bat.**
- Feed your pets indoors.
- Never feed wild or stray animals.
- Do not allow your pets to run free.
- Keep pets and livestock secured on your property.
- Follow all animal control and leash laws in your community.
- If your animal is attacked by a stray or unvaccinated animal, **do not** examine your pets for injuries without wearing gloves.
- Wash your pets with soap and water to remove saliva from the attacking animal.
- **Do not** let your animal come into contact with other animals or people until the situation can be handled by animal control or the county health department.
- If you find a stray animal, contact animal control before you begin to take care of animal.
- If you do become exposed to the Rabies virus, go to the nearest emergency room or county health department to begin treatment.

## **64D-3 PROPOSED RULE CHANGES**

### **Written By Charisma Atkins, Epidemiologist**

The Florida Department of Health proposed changes to Rule 64D-3 of the Florida Administrative Code (FAC), which includes the List of Notifiable Diseases and reporting requirements for all providers, laboratories, and medical facilities. These changes became effective on November 20, 2006, and included new reporting timelines and guidelines, along with a new Single Disease Reporting Form. Several conditions were added to the existing Notifiable List, including Varicella (deaths and outbreaks), Typhus fever (endemic), Influenza due to a pandemic strain, HIV Exposed Newborns, all CD-4 counts, and Hepatitis D, E, and G.

The new reporting timelines include suspect immediately, report immediately, next business day, and other timelines. Suspect immediately should be reported upon first suspicion of a disease when the lab test has been ordered, but there has been no confirmation. This timeframe is illustrated by a large quotation mark next to certain conditions on the new List of Notifiable Diseases. Report immediately is to be reported by phone immediately upon diagnosis of disease. This timeframe is illustrated by a telephone symbol next to specific illnesses on the new List of Notifiable Diseases. Next business day are all diseases that should be reported to the health department the day after their diagnosis (previous timeframe was 72 hours). HIV/AIDS reporting timeframes are three days by laboratories and two weeks by providers. Along with the timeframes, the rule also stipulates the reporting requirements for laboratories and providers for each disease and condition.

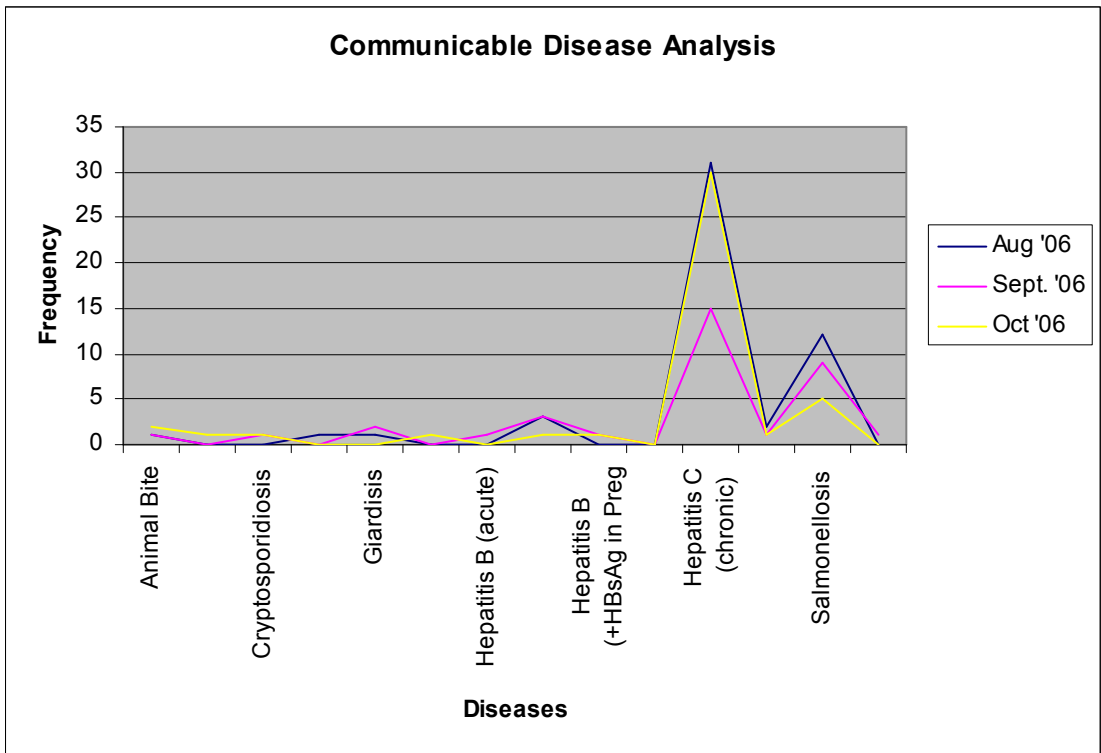
Lastly, the new Single Disease Reporting Form allows providers to use one form to report all communicable diseases. Therefore, there is one main form for providers to fill out as opposed to the two previously used forms (One for Communicable Disease and one for STDs). HIV/AIDS reporting will remain on the existing form.

Upon the Department's implementation of its electronic laboratory reporting system for laboratory findings, reports will be required to be submitted electronically. The Department of Health will specify the manner and format for electronic reporting. Currently the State Lab is submitting their test results through the statewide surveillance system (Merlin) to the patient's county of residence or to the provider's county address.

For a complete list of changes to Rule 64D-3 of the FAC, please refer to [www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/epi/topics/CHAPTER\\_64D\\_3.pdf](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/topics/CHAPTER_64D_3.pdf) and [www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/epi/surv/lor\\_12\\_6.pdf](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/surv/lor_12_6.pdf).

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FALL ANALYSIS

Diseases	Fall Quarter			
	Total	Aug '06	Sept. '06	Oct '06
Rabies (PEP)	4	1	1	2
Campylobacteriosis	1	0	0	1
Cryptosporidiosis	2	0	1	1
Cyclosporiasis	1	1	0	0
Giardiasis	3	1	2	0
Hepatitis A	1	0	0	1
Hepatitis B (acute)	1	0	1	0
Hepatitis B (chronic)	7	3	3	1
Hepatitis B (+HBsAg in Preg Women)	2	0	1	1
Hepatitis C (acute)	0	0	0	0
Hepatitis C (chronic)	76	31	15	30
Lead Poisoning	4	2	1	1
Salmonellosis	26	12	9	5
Shigellosis	1	0	1	0



Hepatitis C has the highest incidence of disease in St. Lucie county than any other reportable disease, followed by Salmonella. The other diseases that are frequently reported include Hepatitis B (chronic and +HBSAg in pregnant women), Animal Bites, Lead Poisoning, and Giardia. The other reportable diseases mentioned above are reported less frequently; however their affect on the community and its residents can be detrimental to the continued health of St. Lucie County.

Rabies (PEP) is also referred to as Animal Bites, and PEP is an acronym for possible exposure prophylaxis.