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Has Influenza Arrived?

During the past two weeks health officials at Dimond High School in Anchorage have reported a widespread occurrence of a flu like illness. The typical illness is characterized by headache, sore throat, temperature of 101°- 102°, and myalgia. The illness lasts three to four days and there have been no hospitalizations. Absenteeism at the school is normally 6% to 8% but during the height of this outbreak was 19%.

Virologic studies are underway to confirm whether this illness is influenza. While the illness is compatible with such a diagnosis many other viruses can cause an identical picture.

(Reported by Eileen Harrington, RN)

Turtles on the Loose

Turtles have long been known to harbor salmonella organisms and many outbreaks of human Salmonellosis related to ownership of pet turtles have occurred. Because of this potential health problem turtles are certified "salmonella free" prior to interstate shipment. Unfortunately, this "salmonella free" condition is often transient and by the time turtles arrive at a retail pet store they may be excreting salmonella.

Sanitarians in Fairbanks recently discovered a contaminated batch of turtles. The owner of the pet store was very cooperative and voluntarily destroyed the entire shipment. No human cases have been reported and cultures taken of turtles from the same batch shipped to Anchorage have been negative for salmonella. Because of this potentially small but significant problem doctors encountering patients with salmonella should inquire whether pet turtles are kept in the house.

(Reported by Frank VonderHarr, David Bruce, Joseph Blair and Jim Allen)

Gonorrhea - An Uncontrolled epidemic

In 1973, over 3,000 cases of gonorrhea were reported. This represents 1% of the population of Alaska.