



Bulletin No. 16
September 16, 1974
Eradication of Measles and Rubella

The reported incidence of measles (rubeola, hard or seven day measles) and rubella (three day measles) has shown a marked decline in Alaska. This has occurred because of high immunization levels in our population.

The State of Alaska has not had any confirmed reported cases of measles or rubella during 1974. This is a record no other state has achieved. Alaska, at this time, can eradicate rubella and measles or at least reduce it to a few isolated cases each year. This is possible because Alaska has good base line immunization rates, relatively isolated communities, and a vigorous public health care delivery system that would make the eradication of these diseases feasible at this time. To achieve this goal, the Alaska Division of Public Health, Section of Communicable Disease Control will follow-up each case of suspect measles or rubella epidemiologically. We will try to document the diagnosis and help organize several local immunization programs where needed to reach the pockets of susceptible children.

The following basic steps are needed to make this program work:

1. As soon as possible after seeing a suspect clinical case of measles or rubella, call collect, the Section of Communicable Disease Control in Anchorage, 272-7534.
2. If possible, submit paired 5-10 cc clotted blood specimens drawn at the time of acute illness and ten to fourteen days later and submit these to the Regional State Laboratory for measles and rubella titers. (A four-fold rise in titer is diagnostic).

Eradication of measles and rubeola in Alaska is possible. However, the key is early notification to our office so that we can respond and abort outbreaks and prevent disease.

Bear Meat Trichinosis Tracked Down.

A case of human trichinosis occurred in Juneau this summer. The patient, a 23 year old female became ill with flu like symptoms in late June. The patient was eventually referred to University of Washington hospital where a diagnosis of trichinosis was made from a muscle biopsy. Investigation of the case revealed that the patient had ingested about a tablespoon of uncooked bear meat, approximately two weeks prior to the onset of her illness. The patient had been given some frozen bear meat which had been ground to make a meat loaf. Before baking, the patient tasted the meat but apparently no other person consumed raw meat. The bear was shot last May on Shelter Island near Juneau. Approximately two dozen individuals have eaten portions of the bear and an epidemiologist and clinical investigation is under way to determine whether other individuals have developed trichinosis.

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