



Bulletin No. 21

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Diphtheria - Wow, What a Response

Well, we hope that at least everyone can take a deep breath. To date, we have confirmed four cases of diphtheria and have also confirmed the presence of seventeen asymptomatic carriers. There have been no new cases, and despite the culturing of well over 300 contacts of known cases, we have not uncovered any more positives. Many thanks for the indefatigable efforts of our State Laboratory personnel.

We would like to express our thanks to all of the people who have invested so many hours in helping to control the diphtheria outbreak. We especially want to thank the people who volunteered their time and efforts to make our immunization clinics such a success. We feel this is an effort that the community can look upon with pride. I would like to thank our private physicians for their support of our program and efforts. We have appreciated their prompt reporting and their willingness to accept an additional burden both in answering questions and in dealing with complications from the immunization program. Over 180,000 people have been immunized.

A small outbreak of diphtheria has occurred in Inuvik, Northwest Territory, Canada. Five confirmed cases with one death and two probable cases awaiting bacterial confirmation have been discovered in one family, all of whom were unimmunized. We have been unable to discover any epidemiologic link between the outbreak in the Northwest Territory and the diphtheria cases which have occurred in Alaska.

Clinics will be held the first part of December for people who need to receive their second shot for primary immunization. Diphtheria toxoid alone for use in people hypersensitive to tetanus is not now commercially available. However, the State expects to obtain adequate quantities approximately two months from now. We will make an announcement as soon as the toxoid is received.

#### **TRICHINOSIS IN BARROW**

In the past six weeks, five cases of trichinosis have been confirmed in Barrow. While the investigation is not complete, it appears walrus and polar bear are implicated as the source of the infection. Because trichinosis is widely dispersed in bear, walrus and beluga whale, the only effective measure which will prevent infection is the adequate cooking of meat. With the holiday season approaching, it is important that we emphasize the need to adequately prepare food which may be served to large numbers of people at celebration gatherings.