



Bulletin No. 16
February 17, 1978
Influenza Arrives in Alaska

The Virology-Rabies Unit in Fairbanks, Alaska has confirmed the identification of A/Victoria/3/75 and A/Texas/1/77 influenza viruses from patients with upper respiratory illness. The first isolate this year was an A/Victoria influenza virus from an Anchorage child who was ill the second week in January. A/Texas has been isolated from five patients with upper respiratory illness in Petersburg and in a patient hospitalized at Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage. In addition, A/Texas has been isolated from Anchorage, Elmendorf Air Force Base, and Cordova.

So far, no strains of the new Russian Influenza Virus A/USSR/90/77 (H1N1) have been identified in Alaska. However, the Russian flu has been confirmed as the culprit in large outbreaks of upper respiratory illness in 15 states.

Because Alaska's influenza season usually runs through March, there is plenty of time for the Russian strain to appear. Our influenza viral culture surveillance program is functioning well. We thank everyone who has participated and encourage continued viral culturing of patients with upper respiratory illness.

(Reported by David Templin, M.D., John Cornors, M.D., Alaska Native Medical Center, Anchorage; Dwayne Coon, M.D., and Thomas Wood, M.D., Bea Espeseth, PHN, Petersburg; Larry Ermold, M.D., Arthur Tilgner, M.D., Cordova; and Don Ritter, Virology Rabies, Fairbanks)

PNEUMOCOCCAL POLYSACCHARIDE VACCINE

Polyvalent polysaccharide vaccine against disease caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumococcus) has recently been licensed in the United States. A full summary of data concerning the vaccine can be found in MMWR, Center for Disease Control, Vol. 27, No. 4, Pg. 25, January 27, 1978. Definitive recommendations for the use of pneumococcal vaccine have not been formulated at the present time. The major indication for which good evidence exists is to use the vaccine in selected individuals - persons over two years of age who have splenic dysfunction (due to sickle cell disease or other causes) or who have anatomical asplenia. Other uses of the vaccine are not yet well defined nor universally agreed upon. Further recommendations concerning the use of this vaccine will be developed in the future.

RABIES IN CARIBOU?.....YES!.....IN CARIBOU! !!

A North Slope worker driving the pipeline haul road south of Deadhorse observed a caribou displaying bizarre behavior. The animal was unsteady and aggressive, and repeatedly charged a road sign before falling to the ground. The worker left his vehicle in order to aid the animal. He stroked the muzzle, picked up the animal, and was then rewarded for his efforts by having the caribou charge him, narrowly missing. The animal butted the vehicle several times before staggering on along the road.

Fortunately, the worker reported the incident to Fish and Game. The animal was destroyed and the head sent to the Virology/Rabies Unit (a busy laboratory this month) for examination. Corneal impression smears and salivary glands were positive for rabies, as was the cerebral cortex. The worker is receiving post-exposure drug treatment.

Rabies is most common in carnivores, but mammals of all species are susceptible to infection. The Arctic and red fox are the primary reservoirs of rabies in Alaska. Since 1949, only two other caribou have been confirmed to be positive for rabies in Alaska - one from Barrow, the other from Anaktuvak Pass. One reindeer was positive for rabies from St. Lawrence Island. Animals exhibiting unusual behavior should not be handled! Report such sightings to Fish and Game.

(Reported by Don Ritter, Virology Rabies Unit, Fairbanks)