



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

April 2013

Avian H7N9 Influenza

As of April 15, 60 cases of avian influenza A (H7N9) have been reported with 13 fatalities. While over 1000 close contacts of these cases are being monitored, the strain does not appear to be transmitted from human to human. Cases are concentrated in the provinces surrounding Shanghai. Some cases occurred after contact with poultry or swine. So far, more of the cases involve individuals over age 60 with one case involving a child with minor illness. About one-third of the cases are among those ages 18-59. China is expanding its surveillance to include ICU patients in hospitals in affected provinces.

Ducks, chickens, pigeons and quail in the four provinces have tested positive for the virus. The Ministry of Agriculture in China has ordered the "depopulating" of poultry in markets in those provinces and is closing those markets. Chinese authorities in Hong Kong have raised a preliminary alert and have said that they are taking precautions at the airport. The virus has been given a new official name: Avian influenza A:H7N9 virus, and to date no cases of the H7N9 virus have been detected in the United States.

The CDC is taking early steps to develop a candidate vaccine for the virus. Preliminary tests suggest that the virus is susceptible to antiviral medications. There is no information to indicate whether rapid influenza tests can detect this influenza strain, but the reverse-transcription PCR assay performed by the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Laboratory is capable of detecting the new strain. US travelers showing signs and symptoms of influenza-like illness who have visited China or had contact with a known case within 10 days of returning to the US may be candidates for such testing.

Novel Coronavirus (NCoV) infections

A total of 17 people with 10 fatalities have been identified as infections with the novel coronavirus. Cases have been thus far identified in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and the UK. A least one instance of person-to-person transmission has been reported. The CDC is developing a PCR assay that will be distributed to state and local public health laboratories to assure preparedness to detect cases in the US.

Nationwide shortage of tuberculin skin test antigens (PPD)

The CDC reported on April 12, that tuberculin skin test products, TUBERSOL (Sanofi) and APLISOL (JHP Pharmaceuticals) are in very short supply nationwide.

M. tuberculosis infections can be detected with use of an interferon gamma release assay (IGRA) that is performed on blood. The San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory performs the Quantiferon In-tube Gold assay and can provide blood collection supplies and courier services to any healthcare provider.

SLO Public Health Laboratory website <http://www.slopublichealth.org/lab>.