



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

July 2014

Pertussis Epidemic, California 2014

Pertussis infections in California continue to be diagnosed with nearly 5,500 cases reported for this year. The California Department of Public Health reports that transmission of pertussis is at epidemic levels. The SLO Public Health Laboratory has tested numerous specimens in recently weeks using the Bordetella Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test. Nasopharyngeal wash and swab specimens in saline are being accepted for testing.

For patients that are members of an HMO such as CCPN or Physician's Choice, the SLO Public Health Laboratory must receive a physicians order and an Advanced Benefits Notice (ABN) to allow billing of the patient. Fee is \$104.50 on July 1, 2014, and all insurances can be billed by the SLO Public Health Laboratory.

Bioterrorism agents in the News

Two of the six **smallpox** virus-containing vials discovered at National Institutes of Health that were transferred to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been shown to contain viable virus. Smallpox, known also by its scientific name as variola, was the deadly virus that was the scourge of civilization for centuries. It's been considered an eradicated disease since 1980, following successful worldwide vaccination programs. The last known outbreak in the U.S. was in 1947 in New York.

A case of pneumonic **plague**—the first since 2004—was reported by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Pneumonic plague is highly risky for human to human transmission as has occurred in historic pandemics.

The CDC reports that no infections of staff scientists have been detected since the discovery that samples provided to BSL-2 laboratories may have contained live spores or vegetative cells of the agent of **anthrax**, *Bacillus anthracis*. However, CDC followed with a report of the inadvertent contamination of H9N2 **influenza** virus samples with the H5N1 that was shipped to a USDA laboratory in Georgia.

San Diego County reports detection of the agent of **Tularemia** in a domestic cat and the potential risk of transmission to household members.

The San Luis Obispo Public Health can test for the agents of anthrax, plague, tularemia, influenza virus by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and can rule out smallpox virus by testing for poxvirus genes in human specimens and environmental samples. Definitive smallpox testing can be performed at the California state public health laboratory.