

FOCUS

On Preparedness

Cherokee County Health Department

Flu Surveillance

By: Rhonda Jones

Each fall CCHD begins flu surveillance that continues until school lets out in May. We receive reports from hospitals, doctors offices, and several schools. Once a week, a county flu report is sent to Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) who then sends a state flu surveillance report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Each state receives a classification of no activity, sporadic, local, regional, or

widespread activity. As of January 12, Texas was one of only five states in the nation that was classified as having widespread flu activity. However, just five weeks later Florida is the only state not classified as having widespread flu.

This is a good example of how fast the flu, whether seasonal or pandemic, can spread. To help prevent the spread of flu, follow these health habits:

- Get a flu shot yearly

- Avoid close contact with others
- Stay home when you are sick
- Wash your hands often with warm soapy water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Practice other good health habits such as getting enough sleep, being physically active, managing your stress, and eating a nutritious diet.



Dog Bite Prevention

By: Rhonda Jones

Residents of Cherokee County know it not unusual to see dogs roaming through the neighborhoods. The problem is, occasionally these dogs bite. In the last six months CCHD has received at least three reports of children being bitten by dogs. Not only does this cause injury, pain and possible disfigurement, it also brings the risk of contracting rabies.

Prevention is obviously the best approach. By following some simple steps many dog bites can be avoided. Adults need to teach children how to safely interact with dogs and safety measures to prevent

dog bites.

Always be cautious around strange dogs because they may view you as an intruder or a threat. If you don't know the dog don't approach it or try to pet it. Never pet a dog that is behind a fence. Don't pet dogs that are in a car or in the back of a truck. Most dogs will protect that space. If a dog is with it's owner, ask permission before touching or petting it. Before petting any dog, always allow it to smell you first.

Don't pull on a dog's ears or tail and never tease it or treat it roughly. Don't disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping

because they may bite if they are startled or frightened. Never pet a dog that is playing with a toy. Dogs are often protective of their toys and may think you are trying to take it.

A dog that has been injured or is in pain may react in ways that it does not normally behave. An injured dog, even your own dog, may not realize you are trying to help it and may bite you.

Mother dogs are often very protective of their young. If you try to handle their puppies (Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| Coordinator's Corner | 2 |
| Update on Food Employee Training Requirements | 3 |
| Handy Hints for Preparedness | 3 |
| Disease 101: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning | 4 |

Coordinator's Corner

By: Julie Levett

Cherokee County has a population of almost 50,000 people. Sudden changes in weather conditions, disease outbreak or man-made hazards can affect the health of our community.

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is a national supply of antibiotics, chemical antidotes, antitoxins, antivirals, life support medications, intravenous administration supplies, airway maintenance supplies, and medical and surgical material, for use in a major public health emergency at Point of Distribution Sites or (POD) sites. Planning for the receipt, distribution and dispensing of SNS materials is a complex undertaking with many responsibilities among multiple agencies and organizations.

One of the required activities at the local health department level is to *"Develop a local emergency management plan with supporting infrastructure to provide oral medications during an event to the entire population within 48 hours."*

The Cherokee County Health Department has an emergency plan but, to make it work we need volunteers.

There are advantages to becoming an SNS volunteer:

- You and your immediate family members will have access to the distributed supplies and medications first.
- POD sites are set-up at local schools
- PODS operate for 48 hours or 2 days

- Job assignments are made based on skills and interests of the person volunteering.
- Training is available several times per year.

Hopefully, Cherokee County will never have to set-up a Point of Distribution (POD) Site. However, should the need arise we will look to our community for volunteers to help provide for our local population.

For more information about volunteering call:
(903) 683-6142 Monday thru Thursday 7 am to 6 pm



Dog Bite Prevention Continued

(Continued from page 1)

the mother may bite you in an attempt to protect them.

Understanding a dog's body language is another way to avoid being bitten. Dogs that are angry or fearful are likely to bite. An angry dog may try to look big: ears standing up, the fur on its back standing on end, and the tail standing straight up (it may be wagging). The dog may show its teeth, growl and stare at whoever is approaching. A frightened dog might shrink to the ground, put its tail between its legs, and fold its ears back.

If you are approached by a dog that looks like it may

attack you, follow these steps:

- Never scream or run. Even if a dog looks like it may attack, never turn your back and run away. A dog's natural instinct will be to chase and catch you.
- Remain motionless, hands at your sides (stand like a tree), and avoid direct eye contact with the dog, even if the dog comes up to you and smells you. When the dog loses interest in you, slowly back away until it is out of sight.
- If you are on the ground lie still (like a log) with your knees tucked into your stomach and your

hand over your ears. If you stay still and quiet the dog will most likely just sniff you and go away.

- If the dog does attack, "feed" it your jacket, purse, bicycle, or anything that you can put between yourself and the dog. If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your ears and remain motionless. Try not to scream or roll around.



The next edition of Focus On Preparedness will cover what to do when someone is attacked or bitten by a dog.

Update on Food Employee Training Requirements

By: Charlotte Sanders

A new county order adopted in March, 2006 requires most food establishments to have a Certified Food Manager with training received through a State accredited program. The only exceptions to the manager's training are child care facilities, establishments that do not prepare or handle exposed potentially hazardous food, and nonprofit organizations.

The order also requires all food employees who work with unpackaged food, food equipment or utensils, or food-contact surfaces to complete the food handler training. The training covers the causes of foodborne illnesses and preventive measures, good hygienic practices, the correct food temperatures, prevention of contamination by employees and procedures to

prevent cross-contamination of foods.

Food establishments that handle only prepackaged food and do not prepare or package food are exempt from the requirements of both a certified food manager and food handler training.

Nine hundred and seventy food workers have attended the classes I have taught between June, 2006 and November, 2007. For all those taking the classes, 278 failed the quiz used to determine food safety knowledge prior to the training. But only 21 did not pass the quiz given at the conclusion of the training.

This required training of

managers and food workers should ensure that the food offered to the public is handled and prepared in a manner to reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses. Most of the food establishments have been very cooperative in obtaining the required training. It has been a lot of work on all of our parts, but I believe it has been well worth the time and effort. It has made me feel very positive about the program to have individuals personally thank me for the information they learned!

A new service being offered allows food establishments to rent the ServSafe training DVD in either English or Spanish. This should help with employees who are not able to attend classes or take the course online.



Handy Hints for Preparedness

Build Your Own First Aid Kit

- Thermometer
- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain/fever relievers
- Cold/flu medications
- Antidiarrheal, antacids, laxatives
- Antibiotic ointment, burn ointment, antihistamine ointment, hydrocortisone ointment
- Sterile dressings, gauze, assorted sized bandaids
- Eye wash solution, eye pads
- Scissors and tweezers
- Disposable gloves
- Cold packs
- Hypoallergenic tape and safety pins
- Toothache medication
- Cleansing agent/towelettes
- Alcohol

Check yearly for expiration dates and rotate stock.

Have at least one phone in your home that does not need electricity. Cordless phones will not work when the power is out.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has an excellent website for kids to learn about preparedness.

www.ready.gov/kids/home.html

“Disasters force us to make a choice.
We can be afraid or we can be ready.”

Tom Ridge,
Former Secretary of Homeland Security

Persons With Disabilities

You should have at least 3 people who can help you in an emergency. **Do not** depend on only one person.

Traits to look for in people who will help you may include the following:

1. Strong
2. Calm
3. Listen Well
4. Communicate clearly
5. Can guide you well
6. Can attend to important details



Cherokee County Health Department

593 North Main
Rusk, TX 75785

Phone: 903-683-6142

Fax: 903-683-3109

Email: jlevett@texashan.org
rjones@texashan.org

On-line Resources

- www.cchdtexas.org
- www.cherokeeflu.com
- www.dshs.state.tx.us
- www.cdc.gov
- www.texasprepares.org

Public Health Preparedness Team

Judith Beck, RN

CCHD Director

Mary Bone, MD

CCHD Medical Director

Julie Levett, BS, RRT

Public Health Preparedness Coordinator

Rhonda Jones, LVN

Disease Surveillance/PHIN Administrator

Charlotte Sanders, RS

Sanitarian

Disease 101: Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Cherokee County Health Department and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) are warning people trying to stay warm about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Invisible, odorless and tasteless, carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous gas produced by burning fuel such as gasoline, natural gas, kerosene, charcoal or wood. Inside, CO can come from a gas-fueled furnace, water heater, clothes dryer, range, space or kerosene heater, fireplace or wood stove.

"Dangerous CO problems occur when home appliances are poorly maintained or used incorrectly," said Kay Soper, DSHS indoor air quality specialist. "Non-vented gas and kerosene appliances have the greatest potential to

produce dangerous levels of CO in the home."

Portable generators sometimes used during a power outage also may present a CO hazard. "These should be placed outside the home and well away from any doors or windows," Soper said.

Smoldering or poorly vented fireplaces, slow-burning fuels such as charcoal and vehicle exhausts also are potentially hazardous. New homes, or newly remodeled homes, have higher risks for carbon monoxide hazard because often they are sealed tighter than older homes.

At low concentrations, CO causes fatigue in healthy people and chest pain for those with heart disease. At higher concentrations, however, CO inhalation

causes impaired vision and coordination, headaches, dizziness, confusion, nausea and death.

DSHS offers these precautions to help prevent CO poisoning:

- Be sure all appliances are installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Have the heating and ventilation systems professionally inspected annually.
- Do not use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning device inside a house or outside near a window.
- Don't use an unvented gas or kerosene heater in enclosed spaces, especially

sleeping areas.

- Never leave an automobile running in a closed garage or in a garage attached to the house even with the garage door open. "People with gas appliances should invest in a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector," Soper said. "CO detectors can warn people if carbon monoxide levels become dangerously high."

Anyone who suspects symptoms of CO poisoning should open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and go outside. In cases of severe CO poisoning, call 9-1-1 for emergency services.