

# EpiNews

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## **SPOTLIGHT: RABIES**

By Cynthia Lewandowski, RN

The first known case of human rabies in Florida was in 1881 in Key West in a 38 year-old man. Since then, 73 people have died of rabies in the state, with the last human case reported in 1948 in Tampa.

Animals at high risk of spreading rabies are: dogs, cats, raccoons, foxes, bats, skunks, and bobcats. Due to the growing cat population, cats are the #1 domestic animal reported with rabies. Bites or scratches from rats, gerbils, mice, squirrels, hamsters, guinea pigs, chipmunks, and rabbits rarely, if ever, pose a risk of rabies.

Rabies virus infects the central nervous system, causing encephalopathy and ultimately death. Early symptoms of rabies in humans are nonspecific, consisting of fever, headache, and general malaise. As the disease progresses, neurological symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, paralysis, hallucinations, hypersalivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water). Death usually occurs within days of the onset of symptoms. Once clinical signs of rabies appear in a human, it is nearly always fatal. There have only been 6 documented cases of human survival from clinical rabies. Once exposed, disease prevention is entirely prophylactic and includes passive antibody human rabies immune globulin and vaccine.

Although human rabies deaths are rare, the cost of prevention can be expensive. Typically, the estimated cost for human rabies immune globulin plus the five doses of vaccine exceeds \$1000.00. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) can be avoided if the animal is available for observation. Observation can be done for dogs, cats, ferrets, and livestock. For other animals, testing can be done to see if the animal is negative for rabies. The Palm Beach County Health Department provides consultation and appropriate pharmaceuticals for post-exposure prophylaxis.

*Editor's note: As of this publication date, 4 animals in Palm Beach County have tested positive for rabies in 2001: 2 raccoons, 1 fox, and 1 cat. 40 people have been given post-exposure prophylaxis.*

## **CYCLOSPORA OUTBREAK IN PALM BEACH COUNTY**

By Dr. Savita Kumar, Karen LaFleur, and Janet Wamnes

On January 25, 2001, the Palm Beach County Health Department's Division of Epidemiology received notification from a local hospital of a single confirmed laboratory case of Cyclosporiasis. On January 30, three additional laboratory-confirmed cases of Cyclosporiasis were reported. Three out of the four cases were associated with a country club in Boca Raton. The Palm Beach County Health Department began an investigation along with Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology and Department of Business and Professional Regulation staff.

Of the 109 interviews conducted on symptomatic and non-symptomatic area residents (most of them country club members), 39 met the case definition. The seven (7) laboratory-confirmed community cases were not included in the analysis because their exposure could not be linked to the retail food facility involved. Two earlier onsets (September 9, 2000 and December 12, 2000) did not meet the case definition. Thirty-nine (39) individuals reported experiencing diarrhea with a median number of 5 episodes per day (range 1-30 days). Fatigue, gas/bloating, cramps, loss of appetite, nausea, weight loss, vomiting, chills, headache and body ache, fever, and constipation were also reported. Median duration of illness was 4 days (range 1-30 days). There were six (6) hospitalizations associated with this investigation. Among those hospitalized, 2 were country club patrons and 4 were community cases. No deaths were associated with the outbreak. Sixty-six percent (66%) of cases were female. The median age of cases was 71 years old.

The outbreak appears to have occurred among residents of a country club and among residents of the surrounding area in the southern section of Palm Beach County, Florida. Also involved were several of the employees of the country club facility.

The environmental investigation of the food service facility showed several improper food handling procedures, including: cross contamination of soiled wiping cloths onto food contact surfaces; wiping cloths not stored in proper sanitation dilution; dishwasher not properly sanitizing; and hand washing facilities not being used properly. Six of the 10 ill employees tested positive for *Cyclospora cayatenensis*.

Statistical analysis of the data collected did not reveal any significant association with any of the food groups investigated. Univariate analysis of the foods most frequently associated as the vehicle of the agent could not establish a significant association with the outbreak.

**Communicable Diseases and Selected Public Health Indices  
Palm Beach County, Florida**

**Enteric, Hepatitis, Meningitis, AIDS, HIV, STD, TB,  
Live Births, Infant Deaths, Foodborne Outbreaks,  
Childhood Lead Testing**

**1st Quarter  
January – March 2001**

	<b>Number This Qtr.</b>	<b>Number To Date This Yr.</b>	<b>Number to Date Last Yr.</b>
<b><i>Enteric, Hepatitis, Meningitis</i></b>			
Campylobacteriosis	11	11	13
Shigellosis	7	7	3
Salmonellosis	22	22	33
Giardiasis	3	3	6
Hepatitis A	6	6	23
Hepatitis B	12	12	5
Meningitis & Invasive Disease due to Neisseria Meningitidis	0	0	2
Meningitis & Invasive Disease due to Haemophilus Influenzae	5	5	0
<b><i>AIDS</i></b>			
# New AIDS Cases Reported (Adult/Adolescent)	112	112	161
<b><i>HIV***</i></b>			
# HIV Tested	4147	4147	3853
# HIV Positive	117	117	154
% HIV Positive	2.8	2.8	4.0
<b><i>STD</i></b>			
Primary/Secondary Syphilis	8	8	8
Congenital Syphilis	1	1	0
Gonorrhea	204	204	265
Chlamydia	429	429	390
<b><i>Tuberculosis</i></b>			
Total Tuberculosis Cases	17	17	9
Total Tuberculosis Cases <15 Yrs. of Age	0	0	0
<b><i>Live Births</i></b>			
Total Infant Births	3342	3342	3165
Infant Births, White	2284	2284	2210
Infant Births, Non-White	1050	1050	953
<b><i>Infant Deaths</i></b>			
Total Infant Deaths	17	17	27
Infant Deaths, White	8	8	14
Infant Deaths, Non-White	9	9	13
<b><i>Food Related Complaints and Outbreaks</i></b>			
Number of Complaints	102	102	80
Suspected Foodborne Illness Outbreaks	7	7	4
Confirmed Foodborne Illness Outbreaks	1	1	1
<b><i>Childhood Lead Testing</i></b>			
Lead Poisoning (Venous Testing >=10)	8	8	9

Data provided is provisional

N/A = Not Applicable

\*\*\*Data Representing PBCHD clients only

\*\*Data Unavailable

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