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Nebraska Seeing Uptick in Whooping Cough Cases DHHS Stresses Vaccination

Note: Sound bites on this topic are available at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio

Lincoln – Whooping cough cases are on the rise in eastern and southeastern Nebraska. Some other areas of the state also have confirmed cases. State health officials stress the need for Nebraskans to remain vigilant when it comes to vaccination.

“There were more than 200 whooping cough cases in January which is higher than some of our total case numbers for previous years and that’s concerning,” said Dr. Joseph Acierno, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. “Parents should check their children’s vaccination records as well as their own to make sure everyone is protected.”

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly contagious disease marked by severe coughing. It’s caused by bacteria found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person. Whooping cough is spread through close contact when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

It can affect people of all ages but is most common in infants and young children and can be life-threatening especially for babies under a year old. Older children, teenagers and adults who may not know they have the disease can spread it to infants and young children in their household. Anyone in contact with babies, toddlers and school-age kids should be vaccinated against whooping cough.

Besides vaccination, preventive measures like covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands and staying home when sick can help protect from whooping cough, flu, the common cold and other respiratory diseases.

Total whooping cough cases for 2015 and prior years:

2015 – 215 cases so far

2014 – 395

2013 – 240

2012 – 242

2011 – 56

2010 – 216

2009 – 140

2008 – 276

2007 – 70
2006 – 99
2005 – 311
2004 – 103

Children are vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough as part of a five-shot series. Children usually receive doses at 2, 4 and 6 months old, a fourth dose is given when a child is 15-18 months old and then the fifth dose is received prior to entering school. Nebraska law also requires proof of a whooping cough booster shot before entering 7th grade.

If you're under age 65 and haven't had pertussis-containing vaccine as an adult, you should receive one dose of the tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough) booster vaccine - Tdap.

For vaccination information, contact your local health care provider or your local health department. DHHS' Immunization Program is another good resource at 402-471-6423. For more information on whooping cough, go to <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/immunization>.