

Overseas briefs

Source: Public Health Laboratory Service, Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre, England and Department of Health, New Zealand

Escherichia coli O157, England

Outbreak associated with a music festival: Eight cases of *Escherichia coli* O157 phage type 2 infection and one case of haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) were reported from people who attended a music festival in late June in the south-west of England. Seven of the eight isolates were indistinguishable in tests carried out by the Public Health Laboratory Service. Interviews with all patients identified no common source of food or water, and they had not camped close to each other. The festival was held on a working dairy farm. Over 500 cows grazed on the site until a week before the festival. The field was contaminated with cattle faeces, and heavy rain before the festival resulted in the site being wet and muddy. Patients reported getting muddy and being unable to wash before eating. Faecal samples have been collected from cows, and the culture results are not yet available.

Outbreak associated with a farm visit: In the past two months, three children in the south-east of England have developed infection with *Escherichia coli* O157 after visiting an open farm in Hertfordshire. Two subsequently developed haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS). *E. coli* O157 was also isolated from goats on the farm. Phage typing and further analysis by the Public Health Laboratory Service showed

that all the *E. coli* isolates, from goats and humans, were indistinguishable strains of phage type 21. This is the second most commonly isolated phage type in England and Wales. The farmer has closed the farm voluntarily. Precautionary measures should be taken when organising visits to farms, to reduce the risk of infection.

Measles, New Zealand

A measles epidemic began in February 1997, with community outbreaks in Auckland and Hamilton. Case numbers increased rapidly during April, May and June and spread to affect most geographical regions of New Zealand. To the end of June 1997, there had been 927 notifications of which 422 were confirmed by laboratory testing or by a history of contact with a laboratory confirmed case. Of these cases, 54 were hospitalised. There have been no deaths reported. The Ministry of Health and the regional health authorities have introduced an intensified immunisation programme to control measles. This programme involves identifying local outbreaks of the disease, and coordinating a prompt and intensified local response. This includes vaccination of all 2 - 10 year old children with an early second dose of MMR vaccine, in place of the dose that is usually given at 11 years of age.

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