



The Immune Response

October 2001

SPONSORED BY

CSL

Vaccines

Please copy and distribute to all immunisation providers in your practice or health centre. Thank you.

Anthrax

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) is a Commonwealth body with representatives from the Commonwealth, State and Territory health agencies and other Government and research bodies. CDNA meets on a regular basis and keeps track of disease outbreaks within Australia.

It is within this forum that a case of anthrax would be reported. An anthrax outbreak would most likely be first recognised in animals, and immediate control measures would involve quarantine and notifying relevant health authorities to look for symptoms in humans.

The last reported human case of anthrax in Australia occurred in February 1997. A 39 year old male knacker worker contracted anthrax and was admitted to hospital where he made a full recovery following treatment. Public health measures were immediately put in place to prevent further human cases.

How anthrax is spread

Human infection with anthrax usually results from direct contact with infected animals, or animal products such as wool, meat or hides. The spores can survive for long periods of time in certain soils, in animal products such as hair, hides and wool, and in feeds and fertilisers prepared from animals that died of anthrax.

In humans, the disease occurs in one of two forms. When infection takes place through the skin, sores (papules) develop within one to three days. These begin as small red swellings which later develop into black depressions. The case fatality rate of untreated skin infection is between five and 20 per cent.

Inhalation of infective material causes pulmonary anthrax with flu-like symptoms.

Infection acquired by inhalation can be rapidly fatal. With effective antibiotic treatment few deaths occur. There is no evidence of spread of the infection from person to person.

Anthrax vaccine

The USA manufactures a vaccine for anthrax, but it is not registered in Australia. The vaccine can, however, be imported by special arrangements when it is needed. The vaccination itself involves six doses, three given two weeks apart followed by three additional injections given at 6, 12, and 18 months, after the first dose. An annual booster is required to maintain ongoing immunity.

State/Territory and Commonwealth roles

The States and Territories are responsible for the quarantine of infected animals and put in place public health measures to either treat human cases or prevent the spread to the human population.

The Commonwealth, through CDNANZ, is responsible for ongoing surveillance and monitoring of diseases such as anthrax. The Department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE) is responsible for animal quarantine issues.

References available on request. There are fact sheets available on anthrax, smallpox and plague. If you would like copies, contact your relevant division.

BRIEFS

Freezer v cyclic fridges (plus a great offer)

I have had a few enquiries lately about which vaccine fridge a practice should buy. Do you need to go for the cyclic with no freezer or a frost free with a freezer? If you buy one without a freezer, it will be cyclic, which means that you will have more room and less chance of vaccines freezing if they are too close to the freezer. But being cyclic, there will be a bigger temperature range. Having said that, several of our local practices do have cyclic fridges with no major temperature problems. A frost free does have the benefits of not needing defrosting and has somewhere to keep your icepacks, but the freezer takes up space. The 7th Edition of The Australian Immunisation Handbook page 54 recommends a frost free fridge. With that in mind, I have tracked down the following special. Harvey Norman in Lismore (ask for Paul) has a Westinghouse 210l frost free for \$565. It has a very small freezer. There is a limited supply at this price but he will order more in if there is a demand ~ Gae McDonald, Project Officer, Northern Rivers Division of GP.

Q Fever accreditation

We have had a new development with the Q fever vaccination program. Now livestock and dairy farmers have been included in the target group. The target group are entitled to free Q fever vaccine from accredited doctors. Registration for the accreditation evenings can be faxed to your division.

Hib titer

Please check your fridges for Hib titer as they should have all expired by now.

Accreditation course

The immunisation accreditation course has enrolments starting each month. If you are not accredited please consider enrolment. Phone the NSW College of Nursing, Distance Education for details on (02) 9745 7517.

For further information about anything appearing in *The Immune Response* call Gae McDonald, Northern Rivers, 6622 4453 Cheryl Colley, Tweed Valley, 6672 5158.

**Last chance...
Immunisation update**

October 23rd

Coraki Conference Centre

Call Marianne Trent, PHU on (02) 6620 7514.

This circular aims to provide a forum for immunisation service providers in the Northern Rivers AHS. Published monthly by the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice Immunisation Project. To contribute contact Gae McDonald on ph 6622 4453, fax 6622 3185, email <media@nrdgp.org.au>.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the NRDGP. ©NRDGP 2001.