

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

May 9 - 15, 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On May 8, 2024, the Department of Disease Control held a joint meeting with the Lao People's Democratic Republic to collaborate on developing a referral system and improving the quality of healthcare for migrant workers infected with HIV. The meeting took place at River City Hotel, Mukdahan Province, aiming to ensure continuous healthcare and integration into the treatment system, thereby reducing HIV transmission rates and AIDS-related deaths. During the meeting, a resolution was collectively passed to enhance and develop guidelines for patient referral and cross-border tuberculosis and AIDS referral programs. The objective was to establish uniform guidelines including operational procedures, data collection forms, and variables for recording comprehensive and extensive data to facilitate increased patient referrals.
- On May 10, 2024, there was a report of an outbreak of an unknown disease in the Republic of Samfara, located in the northwest of Niger. The report identified 177 cases with four deaths. Symptoms included abdominal swelling, ascites, hepatomegaly, and fever. Similar incidents were reported in the state in 2010, preliminarily linked to mining activities and contamination with heavy metals (particularly lead). Currently, Niger's Disease Control and Prevention Center and related agencies are investigating to determine the cause of this recent outbreak.
- On May 12, 2024, a report on the rabies situation in Indonesia was released. From January to April 2024, in the province of West Kalimantan, there were 1,561 individuals exposed to animals at risk of rabies bites. Unfortunately, four deaths have occurred. Vaccines have been procured to prevent rabies and was administered to 1,414 at-risk individuals. Authorities have also advised those bitten by animals to clean wounds with clean water for approximately 15 minutes and promptly receive rabies vaccination from healthcare personnel.

WITH MEASLES SPREADING, CHILDREN ARE ADVISED TO RECEIVE VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organization has warned that more than half of the countries worldwide are at risk of measles outbreaks due to low vaccination coverage since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Thailand experienced a major measles outbreak in the 2018-2019, with over 3,000 confirmed cases per year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of measles cases decreased significantly, possibly due to COVID-19 prevention measures, as both diseases are respiratory infections. However, with the easing of these measures, measles outbreaks have started to resurge.

According to the Week 19 Surveillance Report (May 9-15, 2024) by the Department of Disease Control, there were seven clusters of measles cases, mostly in the southern provinces. From January 1 to May 5, 2024, there were 697 measles cases reported, with no fatalities. The age group most affected was children aged 0-4 years, accounting for 58% of cases. Preschool-aged children urgently need to complete basic vaccinations according to guidelines.

Measles is caused by the measles virus and can spread easily through respiratory droplets when infected individuals cough, sneeze, or talk closely to others. Infected individuals can spread the virus from 4 days before to 4 days after a rash appears. Symptoms typically start with fever, runny nose, and dry cough, followed by high fever, red and watery eyes, and a rash of red spots. Serious complications include pneumonia and encephalitis, which can be fatal. There is no specific treatment for measles; hence prevention, especially through vaccination, is crucial.

The best prevention method, especially for young children, is vaccination, which is provided free of charge according to the Ministry of Public Health guidelines. Continuous public awareness and campaigns are essential to highlight the importance of vaccination and to ensure that children receive vaccinations according to the schedule, as it remains the best preventive measure.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Public Health officials should educate residents about measles, informing them about its causes, symptoms, transmission, and prevention methods. Residents with symptoms such as fever and rash are advised to promptly consult a doctor. If diagnosed with measles, they should refrain from going to work or school and avoid traveling to densely populated areas to reduce disease spread. Close contacts of patients should monitor for fever and rash, wear face masks during symptoms, and avoid close contact with others.

The best prevention method, especially for young children, is to receive two doses of measles vaccine at 9 months and 1.5 years old, available at local public health facilities. Medical personnel should assess vaccination coverage in their area and ensure at least 95% coverage among target groups to prevent outbreaks in the community. If a patient with fever and rash or suspected measles is identified, responsible personnel should investigate and collect blood samples for laboratory confirmation within 48 hours. Reports of measles patients should be documented in the measles elimination project database, alongside contact tracing of high-risk close contacts to prevent further transmission in the community.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

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- Information courtesy of: Department of Disease Control, AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections/Bureau of Risk Communication, May 10, 2024
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- Information Source: BlueDot Event Alerts (May 10-13, 2024)
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