



# EPIDEMIOLOGY BULLETIN

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## TOXIC SHOCK SYNDROME UPDATE

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recently released a summary of the national data on cases of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) reported from January 1970 through December 1980. To date, 941 cases of confirmed TSS have been reported. Cases were sporadic before 1978, increased gradually through 1979, rose almost exponentially from October 1979 through August 1980, then suddenly decreased. Of the total, 99% were in women, and 98% of those were menstrually related. Eleven cases occurred in the postpartum period. The age range for female patients was 6-61 years, with a mean of 23. One-third of all cases occurred in women 15-19 years old. Only 15 cases occurred in non-whites. Seventy-three cases (7.8%) resulted in death. Cases have been reported from 48 states with numbers ranging from 1 to 128 per state. Virginia reported 18 cases total, 15 during 1980.

The explanation for the decrease in cases starting in September 1980 is unknown. However, manufacturer's data show a decrease in tampon use since July, 1980 although this decrease is not enough to explain the decrease in cases.

REFERENCE: MMWR, January 30, 1981/Vol. 30/No. 3

## RABIES AND PET FERRETS

The marked increase in queries received by CDC and some state health departments (including Virginia) regarding ferrets and associated possible rabies exposure suggests that the ferret is becoming an increasingly popular pet in the United States. The lack of knowledge about this animal as a potential rabies vector has led us to prepare this summary of information about ferrets and rabies.

Ferrets belong to the family Mustelidae along with the skunk, otter, mink, and weasel. The only wild indigenous ferret in the United States is the black-footed ferret (Mustela nigripes) which is among the rarest of the endangered mammals and is rapidly approaching extinction. There have been only 2 or 3 reliable sightings of black-footed ferrets since 1973.

Ferrets sold as pets in the United States are derived from European ferret stock which have been domesticated for centuries and selectively bred for productivity and desirable behavior traits. According to 1 major producer, about 12,000 ferrets are sold each year in this country, half to the pet trade and half for research; ferrets are not used in the commercial fur industry. Most are marketed at 8-12 weeks of age. There has been about a 5-fold increase in the sale of ferrets in this country in the past 5 years with an equal increase in both pet and laboratory animal markets.

## RABIES AND PET FERRETS - Continued

As pets, ferrets are similar to domestic cats in many ways. Like cats, they are fastidious in their toilet, self-training easily to a litter box or paper. Their behavior is docile and cat-like, unlike that which would be expected of a normal wild mustelid. As pets, ferrets are usually kept in cages except when actually being handled. They are inquisitive and if left to roam free and unattended about the home are apt to get into trouble. They are not normally released outside--as a cat might be--and if they escape it is often difficult to recover them. Escaped ferrets rapidly develop the cunning, speed, and stealth for which their wild counterparts are noted; even so, escaped ferrets do not appear capable of reproducing and establishing themselves in the wild. Rare reports of young European ferrets in the wild are believed to have resulted from escaped pregnant females and are probably not capable of long-term survival.

Although studies on susceptibility of ferrets to rabies have been reported, as a mustelid the ferret is assumed to be highly susceptible and capable of transmitting rabies if infected. Two cases of ferret rabies have been reported in the United States, 1 in 1954 and 1 in 1978. No data are available on the first case; the second case was in a pet for which an exposure could not be determined, although there was a recognized possibility that the animal might have received live rabies vaccine.

It appears that the ferret, while a potential source of rabies exposure for man, is much less likely to be exposed to rabies than are pet skunks, raccoons, or foxes which are often trapped in the wild and then sold as pets. If, in the investigation of a ferret bite, the investigator can be reasonably assured that the animal has had no contact with indigenous rabies vectors and was not vaccinated with MLV rabies vaccine, then the likelihood of the ferret's having rabies seems extremely remote, and antirabies treatment of the bite victim would not seem warranted. If, on the other hand, the ferret has possibly been in contact with wildlife, then rabies should be considered.

We would appreciate receiving any information relative to ferrets and rabies which readers may have so that this information can be disseminated to others who have questions about ferrets and rabies.

REFERENCE: CDC Veterinary Public Health Notes, October 1980

## NEW (SIMPLIFIED) DATES FOR THE VIRGINIA EPIDEMIOLOGY BULLETIN

Because of difficulties in the dating and printing schedules for the VEB, we will, in the future, date each issue according to the month of disease reporting, not the date of publication.

VIRGINIA EPIDEMIOLOGY BULLETIN

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2.	2-28-80	Influenza - Legionnaires' Disease in Virginia, 1979 - Measles Outbreak Follow-Up - 3 Influenza Graphs.
3.	3-29-80	Nongonococcal Urethritis - Influenza Graph/Influenza Activity Declines - Campylobacter Test Available.
4.	4-26-80	MEASLES CONTROL - MAY IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE MONTH - PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE/UNITED STATES - ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER/1979.
5.	5-31-80	Recommendation of the Public Health Service Immunization Practices Advisory Committee - INFLUENZA VACCINE 1980-81.
6.	6-28-80	Recommendation of the Immunization Practices Advisory Committee RABIES PREVENTION.
7.	7-26-80	Rabies in Pet Raccoons-South Carolina - Follow up on the Health Status of the Cuban Refugees - Tuberculosis-United States 1979 Announcements/New Arrivals to Epidemiology and the Sixth Annual Educational Conference of the Association for Practitioners in Infection Control.
8.	8-30-80	Penicillinase-Producing Neisseria Gonorrhoeae - Treatment Recommendations for Other Specified PPNG Situations - Oral Polio Vaccine Update - University of Virginia/Symposium on Hospital Infections
9.	9-27-80	Toxic-Shock Syndrome - Smallpox Vaccination - Ophthalmia Neonatorum.
10.	10-25-80	Measles Outbreak in Rappahannock County - Serological Tests for Gonorrhoea - Treatment of Gonorrhoea
11.	11-29-80	Head Lice - The New Rabies Vaccine - Salmonella Hadar Oubreak.
12.	12-27-80	Influenza 1980-1981 - Meningococcal Meningitis in Perspective.

VIRGINIA EPIDEMIOLOGY AND HEALTH

NO.	DATE	TITLE
1.	1-26-80	Measles in Virginia - Follow-up of Vaccines and a Measles Outbreak in Loudoun County - 1979 Virginia Epidemiology Bulletin - 90 (1) 1-26-80
2.	2-18-80	Influenza - Influenzae, Diseases in Virginia, 1979 Outbreak Follow Up - 4 Influenza Issues
3.	3-29-80	Neisseria meningitidis - Influenza Virus/Diphtheria Diphtheria - Characteristic Test Results
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5.	5-31-80	Recommendation of the Public Health Service Practice Advisory Committee - IMMUNIZATION
6.	6-28-80	Recommendation of the Immunization Practice Advisory Committee RABIES PREVENTION
7.	7-26-80	Rabies in Pet Raccoons-South Carolina - Follow up on the Health Status of the Cuban Refugees - Tuberculosis-United States Announcements/New Arrivals to Epidemiology and the Sixth Annual International Conference of the Association for Parasitology in Infection Control.
8.	8-30-80	Tandemase-Producing Neisseria Gonorrhoeae - Treatment Recommendations for Other Specified PWG Situations - Oral Policy Vaccine Update - University of Virginia/Suspension on Hospital Infections
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MONTH: JANUARY

DISEASE	STATE					REGIONS				
	THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	TOTAL TO DATE		MEAN 5 YEAR TO DATE	THIS MONTH				
			1981	1980		N.W.	N.	S.W.	C.	F.
CHICKENPOX	102	80	102	17	114.6	11	19	35	13	24
MEASLES				12	19.0					
MUMPS	13	13	13	10	18.4			4	1	8
PERTUSSIS				2	1.6					
RUBELLA	4	6	4	1	3.6			1		3
MENINGITIS - ASEPTIC	15	11	15	12	8.4	3	2	2	3	5
BACTERIAL	33	26	33	25	19.8	6	4	7	7	9
ENCEPHALITIS - INFECTIOUS	8	2	8		1.0		1	2	4	1
POST-INFECTIOUS	2	2	2		0.2		1	1		
HEPATITIS A (INFECTIOUS)	16	18	16	30	24.0	1	4	4	2	5
B (SERUM)	28	41	28	61	34.2	2	7	8	5	6
SALMONELLOSIS	98	104	98	40	42.8	9	25	10	22	32
SHIGELLOSIS	11	10	11	15	10.4		3	2	6	
TUBERCULOSIS - PULMONARY	20	66	20	40	33.2					
EXTRA-PULMONARY	4	13	4	7	8.2					
SYPHILIS (PRIMARY & SECONDARY)	50	52	50	38	52.0	1	8	6	14	21
GONORRHEA	1,962	1,887	1,962	1,565	1926.4					
ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER		3								
RABIES IN ANIMALS	6	9	6		1.0	6				
MENINGOCOCCAL INFECTIONS	7	9	7	6	5.0	1	1	3	1	1
INFLUENZA	3,522	381	3,522	37	403.6	164	334	2690	262	72
MALARIA	2	2	2	3	2.0		1	1		
OTHER: HISTOPLASMOSIS	1		1	2				1		
KAWASAKI DISEASE	4	2	4	4			1			3
REYE'S SYNDROME	3		3		0.4	2	1			
TOXOPLASMOSIS	2		2	1				1	1	

COUNTIES REPORTING ANIMAL RABIES: Page - 5 skunks, Warren - 1 raccoon

OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESSES: Occupational pneumoconioses 8, Occupational dermatitis 4, Occupational hearing loss 7, Asbestosis 6.

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