

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**

23 December 2004

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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## HOT TOPICS

### DOD Asks to Resume Anthrax Vaccinations

18 December – The New York Times reported that the Pentagon is seeking special authority to resume administering the [anthrax vaccine](#) to military personnel, contending that troops in South Korea and the Middle East are at particular risk of being exposed to the bacteria. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz requested that military officials have access to the vaccine in a letter to Tommy G. Thompson, the secretary of health and human services. "There is a significant potential for a military emergency involving a heightened risk to United States military forces of attack with anthrax," Mr. Wolfowitz wrote. He cited a classified intelligence assessment from last month to support his concern, adding that it was the basis for continuing to vaccinate troops serving in South Korea and the Middle East. [View Article](#)

### Early Detection Key in Halting Anthrax Outbreak

15 December – CNN reported that researchers at Johns Hopkins University said that early detection -- and not a pre-exposure vaccination -- is the key to limiting an outbreak of [anthrax](#). Ron Brookmeyer, an author, said that delivering antibiotics within six days of exposure can prevent up to 70 percent of cases of the disease. But, the researchers said, at least 63 percent of those exposed must have been vaccinated and quickly receive a full regimen of antibiotics to reach a prevention rate of 90 percent. Brookmeyer said the public health system may not quite be up to the task of catching early onset. "It is true that, caught early, we think antibiotics would work, but most cases when people become ill with anthrax, inhalational anthrax, you don't recognize it as anthrax right away," he said. "I think we can do better," he said. "I think there are a lot of improvements that can be made to public health preparedness in terms of detecting emerging outbreaks." [View Article](#)

### Outbreak of *Acinetobacter Baumannii* Traced to Wound Care Equipment

21 December – EurekAlert reported that infection control experts at The Johns Hopkins Hospital say tighter rules governing use of a hand-held, high-pressure, water-pumping tool to wash and clean wounds should be adopted to improve the safety of wound care. The finding comes in

response to the investigation of an outbreak of the antimicrobial resistant bacterium [Acinetobacter baumannii](#) at JHH during a two-month period in 2003. The organism infected 11 patients and was traced back to use of pulsatile lavage equipment for wound care. Three of these patients required admission to the intensive care unit for sepsis and respiratory distress. In the future, staff using the water-gun like equipment will have to wear masks, gowns and gloves during procedures, which must also now be performed in private treatment rooms that are fully disinfected between patients to reduce the chances of cross contamination between patients and staff. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and a leading manufacturer of the device have agreed to change the product's labeling to include use of routine infection control procedures. [View Article](#)

## Human-to-Human Spread of Bird Flu Is WHO's Worst Fear

20 December – Bloomberg reported that the potential transmission of [bird flu](#) between humans is the World Health Organization's worst fear, said Francois Xavier Meslin, the group's chief of animal diseases. The ease of human-to-human transmission would make any bird flu pandemic worse than last year's outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, he told reporters today in Singapore. The group previously warned that bird flu may mutate into a form that could pass easily from human to human. "If it happens, which is not yet proven, it's going to be worse than SARS," he said. An Asian outbreak of avian influenza, known as bird flu, killed at least 32 people this year. The H5N1 bird-flu strain, which is potentially fatal to humans, has been passed from infected poultry to people in contact with them, without any confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission. [View Article](#)

## Importing Cheaper Drugs to USA Would be Difficult, US Study

22 December – Medical News Today reported that importing cheaper drugs into the U.S. would eventually save consumers very little money because the safety measures would be too expensive. Many politicians and health groups are saying the report mirrors the scare tactics employed by the domestic pharmaceutical industry. The report to Congress fell short of saying that prescription drug imports should be legal/illegal. Rather, it explained that legislation would have to make sure the drugs complied with FDA requirements. Richard Carmona, US Surgeon General, said it is for Congress to decide whether imports should be allowed or not. Carmona was one of the people in the task force that produced the report. Carmona said "If Congress is willing to consider importation from Canada, then it must be specifically regulated much like FDA regulates the American movement of pharmaceuticals." U.S. politicians from both sides of the political spectrum said the report was not impartial. [View Article](#)

## Patients Urged to Follow Painkiller Labels

21 December – HealthDayNews reported that while government officials and medical experts stress that the link between the painkiller Aleve and an increased risk of heart attack and stroke is a preliminary finding, they also say people should talk to their doctor if they plan on taking the drug for long periods of time. The advice comes on the heels of the revelation that Aleve ([naproxen](#)) increased the risk of cardiovascular trouble by 50 percent in elderly patients who were part of a government study on Alzheimer's disease prevention. That news prompted scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to say they will review the safety of all such [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory \(NSAID\) painkillers](#), including ibuprofen, in all agency-sponsored clinical trials. Meanwhile, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a statement saying that

people taking naproxen should follow the instructions on the drug's label, and not exceed the recommended dosage or take it for longer than 10 days unless their doctor tells them to do so.

[View Article](#)

## Walk Reduces Festive Heart Harm

21 December – BBC News reported that a stroll after Christmas dinner is part of many families' festive timetable - but heart experts say a pre-dinner walk is a good idea. Researchers found it could help reduce the damage done by too much Christmas pudding. A 90 minute walk lowers fat levels in the blood and improves blood vessel function. They said the health benefits of a long stroll remained even after the walker had eaten a high-fat, high-carbohydrate meal. The researchers studied 10 lean and 10 obese middle-aged men. Each was tested twice for his response to a fatty meal, with the tests performed a week or two apart. Levels of [triglycerides](#) (blood fats) were reduced by 25% both before and after the fatty meal. The researchers also looked at the endothelium, the inner wall of the blood vessels which provides an important defense against the build-up of fatty deposits inside the blood vessels. These deposits can disrupt blood flow and lead to a heart attack. Exercise appeared to improve the function of the endothelium by 25% before the meal and 15% afterwards. [View Article](#)

## Youki Spray Curbs Spread Of Superbug MRSA

17 December – EurekAlert reported that in [wound care](#) treatment, a spray called Youki that accelerates the healing process. The wound care system developed to avoid the need to cover up open injuries with bandages is proving successful in preventing, treating and halting the spread of superbug [MRSA](#) bacterium (methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*). Research Director Sujata Jolly from UK laboratory Depeche Mode said, "If you cover a wound week after week then the skin is going to get soggy and it's going to break down. This residue sits on the wound and it's highly alkaline. The wound just gets bigger." Depeche Mode's system is a spray that encourages the skin to heal itself naturally by creating an invisible web across the wound. Amino acids and proteins that mimic those made by blood, rapidly speed up the cell growth to fill any holes. It basically speeds and assists the scabbing process. Wounds are only washed once, at the start of the healing process, then not allowed to get wet at all. "You need to spray several times to build up a protective film," says Jolly. She says that by not changing dressings you're not disturbing the wound and Youki accelerates the healing process and minimizes scarring. [View Article](#)

## Focus on Epidemiology

### Estimated Influenza Vaccination Coverage among Adults and Children --- United States, September 1--November 30, 2004

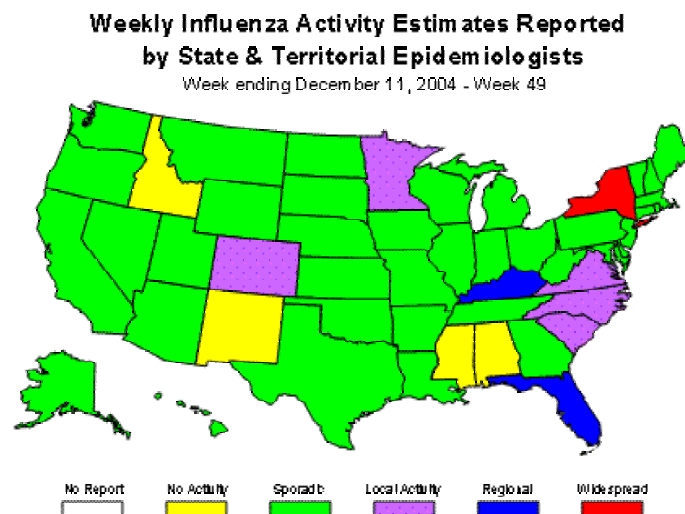
17 December – MMWR reported that because of the unexpected reduction in the amount of available inactivated [influenza vaccine](#) for the 2004--05 influenza season, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that the vaccine be reserved for persons in certain priority groups and asked others to defer or forego vaccination. To assess the use of influenza vaccine and the primary reasons reported for not receiving vaccine, questions

were added to the ongoing Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey. This report indicates that persons in nonpriority groups had largely deferred vaccination and that, among unvaccinated adults in priority groups, one fourth tried to get vaccine but were unable to do so. Vaccination coverage was suboptimal for persons in all assessed priority groups. Because influenza activity peaks in February or later in most years, persons in priority groups should continue to seek vaccination. Among adults in all priority groups, 34.8% reported receiving an influenza vaccination during September 1--November 30, compared with 4.4% of adults aged 18--64 years who were not in a priority group. Coverage was highest (51.1%) among persons aged  $\geq 65$  years, followed by health-care workers with patient contact (34.2%) and adults aged 18--64 years with high-risk conditions (19.3%). Among adults in priority groups who had not yet received influenza vaccine, 23.3% reported that they attempted to obtain vaccination but could not. A substantially greater proportion of children in priority groups received at least one influenza vaccination this season compared with other children; 36.6% of children aged 6--23 months and 26.8% of children aged 2--17 years with high-risk conditions were vaccinated, compared with 8.9% of children aged 2--17 years with no high-risk condition. [View Report](#)

## Influenza Update

### [CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 27 November – Week 49](#)

During week 49 (December 5-11, 2004), influenza activity overall was low in the United States.

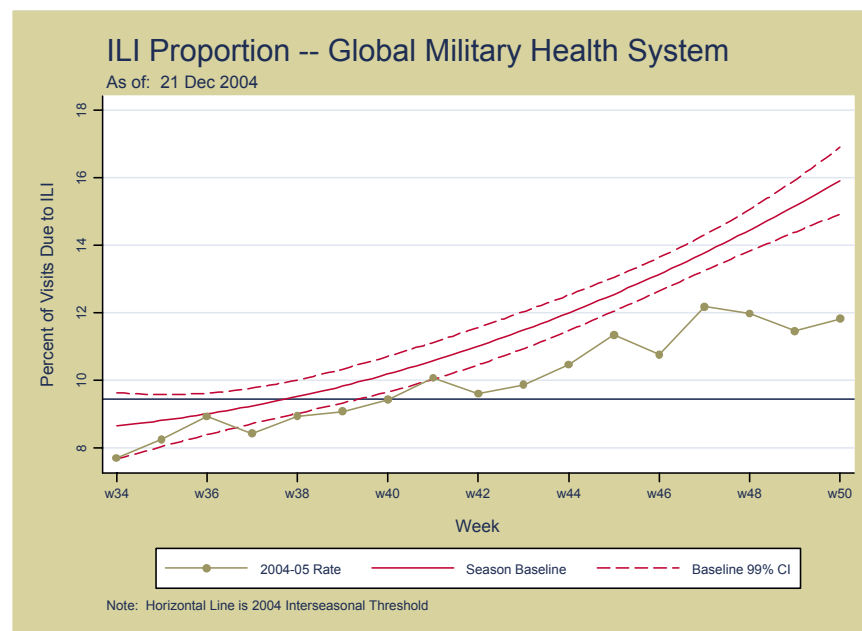


### [European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 12 December - Week 50](#)

The intensity of influenza activity remains low (at baseline levels) in Europe, except for Northern Ireland where the intensity clearly increased compared to previous weeks. The total number of laboratory confirmed cases per week continues to increase, with most cases being influenza A viruses [a mix of A(H1) and A(H3) subtypes]. The total number of laboratory confirmed RSV cases also continues to increase in most networks, but appears to have past its peak in England, France, Ireland and Wales

## DOD Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Program for Week Ending 18 December – Week 50

**Influenza-Like Illness** - This graph plots the percentage of weekly outpatient visits at military installations that had an ICD-9 code correlating with Influenza-Like Illness as defined by [ESSENCE](#). Since 3 October 2004, the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has processed 489 specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. Of those specimens, 31 (6%) were positive for influenza A and 4 (1%) were positive for influenza B. In addition, 95 specimens are still being processed.



## DoD-GEIS: Surveillance for Antimicrobial Resistance in Enteric Pathogens in Thailand

23 December - Antimicrobial resistance among enteric pathogens is of critical public health concern. The problem is especially important in Southeast Asia, where population density and proximity to domestic animals and marginal infrastructure provide ample opportunities for genetic transfer between microorganisms. The GEIS program at the Armed Forces Research Institute for Medical Science (AFRIMS; Bangkok, Thailand) studies diarrhea etiology and drug resistance patterns in Thailand to inform treatment and prophylaxis policies, since reducing inappropriate antibiotic use limits development of resistance. In FY04, ten study sites were selected for surveillance and case-control studies. Children presenting with acute diarrhea were enrolled as cases, while children presenting at the same site for non-infectious causes and without recent history of diarrhea were enrolled as controls. Stool samples from cases and controls were processed and cultured. To date, etiologic analysis has been performed on specimens from 725 cases and 444 controls. *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* are the principle pathogens from Bangkok, while these and *Aeromonas* comprise the majority of isolates from cases at other regional hospitals. Preliminary results were presented to the Thai Ministry of Public Health, local healthcare workers, and the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases in 2004. *Submitted by LTC Rodney Coldren, MC, USA, GEIS Coordinator – AFRIMS. Enteric disease surveillance is a pillar of GEIS and is conducted by GEIS programs*



*at all of the DoD overseas research laboratories (the other laboratories are USAMRU-K, Nairobi, Kenya; NAMRU-2, Jakarta, Indonesia; NAMRU-3, Cairo, Egypt; and NMRC, Lima, Peru). Information on many "hot topics" such as Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).*

***Other timely information can be found in:***

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)  
This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## USCENTCOM

### Kenya: Cases of O'nyong-Nyong Fever Confirmed

16 December – ProMED reported that 15 cases of o'nyong-nyong fever have been confirmed in the Coast Province of Kenya. The cases are from Mombasa and Malindi. There have been no deaths. The presenting features are similar to malaria, but patients have extreme joint pain. Treatment is basically symptomatic. [View Article](#)

### More Than 50 Cases of Typhoid Reported In Tajikistan

19 December – ProMED reported that more than 50 people, including 40 children have contracted [typhoid](#) fever in southwestern Tajikistan and have been hospitalized. All the cases were recorded in the village of Kolkhozabad, some 70 miles south of the capital Dushanbe. A nearby pond may be contaminated. [View Article](#)

### U.S. Gives Iraqi Hospitals Broken Promises in Place of Medicine

17 December - The New Standard reported that despite promises of over \$1 billion in US funding, hospital patients in Iraq continue to suffer ongoing hardship. Problems plaguing Iraqi hospitals range from ongoing medicine and equipment shortages to an overall lack of proper medical infrastructure. Dr. Namin Rashid, the Chief Resident Doctor at Yarmouk Hospital said his hospital is getting only half the supplies it received prior to the US-led invasion in March 2003. A recent report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stated that hospitals in Baghdad are running out of medicine and facing water and electricity shortages. Chuwader Hospital has endured outbreaks of diseases that could have been avoided. "Of course we have typhoid, cholera, kidney stones," Dr. Qasim Al-Nuwesri, the General Manager of the hospital said. "But we now even have the very rare Hepatitis Type-E... and it has become common in our area." [View Article](#)

## USEUCOM

### Mumps Outbreak Across Scotland

16 December – The Herald reported that an outbreak of [mumps](#) previously confined to the west of Scotland has spread to virtually all areas of the country. Public health specialists believe the movement of students, the age group most affected by the outbreak, after the summer break is responsible for the increase in cases. To date, 1414 reports of mumps have been received for the first 48 weeks of 2004, compared with 26 for the same period last year. Overall in 2004, confirmed mumps cases have been reported from 14 of the 15 NHS boards with Orkney the only area to escape infection. Dr Claire Cameron, an epidemiologist in immunization for the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health, said a vaccination program was already under way encouraging measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations for the age group at risk, which is young people aged 13-25."

[View Article](#)

### South Africa's ANC Accuses U.S. of AIDS Drug Cover-Up

18 December – Reuters reported that South Africa's ruling party has accused top U.S. officials of treating Africans like guinea pigs amid questions over testing of a key [HIV/AIDS](#) drug before a U.S.-backed roll-out of the treatment across the continent. The African National Congress (ANC) said that U.S. health officials had "conspired" with German drug firm Boehringer Ingelheim to hide adverse effects of nevirapine when used to try to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. Media reports have suggested tests on the drug's use with pregnant women in Uganda were flawed and that single-dose treatments of nevirapine could result in future drug resistance. The U.S. denied the charges and said while there were some procedural problems with the tests the results pointing to a dramatic reduction of HIV transmission were sound. But the ANC issued a strong response saying "(U.S. officials) entered into a conspiracy with a pharmaceutical company to tell lies to promote the sales of nevirapine in Africa, with absolutely no consideration of the health impact of those lies on the lives of millions of Africans."

[View Article](#)

## USNORTHCOM

### Capsized Craft Was Over Limit in Weight

21 December – The Baltimore Sun reported that the water shuttle that capsized in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, killing five people, was carrying 700 pounds too much weight. The operators of the Lady D followed the 25-passenger limit set by the Coast Guard. But the Coast Guard set that number too high because it had used inaccurate and outdated estimates of average passenger weight. The Coast Guard had used a 1960s-era estimate that an average passenger weighs 140 pounds when it certified the stability of the pontoon boat. The average weight of the 14 men, eight women and three children aboard the Lady D was 28 pounds more than the Coast Guard's estimates, meaning that a boat tested as safe for 3,500 pounds actually had 4,200 pounds aboard. In its report, the National Transportation Safety Board suggested using



an average weight of 174 pounds per passenger, noting that in 2002 the mean body weight of men was 191 pounds and of women 164 pounds. [View Article](#)

## CDC Loosens Restrictions on Flu Vaccine

19 December – Daily News Central reported that although the U.S. has not come up with nearly enough [flu vaccine](#) to meet the expected needs of the population for the current season, authorities now are beginning to worry that some of the existing short supply will go to waste. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) expanded its list of priority groups to include adults age 50-64 and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of persons in high-risk groups. [View Article](#) [View Press Release](#)

## Lung Cancer Link Seen in Gulf War Fires

20 December – HealthDayNews reported that scientists advising the U.S. government have found evidence of an association between [lung cancer](#) in Gulf War veterans and exposure to combustible products used in the war. They stopped short, however, of declaring a cause-and-effect relationship, adding that their conclusions were largely drawn from studies that didn't look at the veterans. The Institute of Medicine study also concluded that there is not enough quality evidence to say whether most of the other health problems experienced by Gulf War veterans are due to exposure to fuels, propellants in Scud missiles, or by-products from oil well fires, exhausts and tent heaters. The report, entitled *Gulf War and Health, Vol. 3: Fuels, Combustion Products and Propellants*, is the third in a series examining the health effects of agents to which Gulf War veterans may have been exposed. The study was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. [View Article](#)

## Medics Answer AIDS Pill Drug Resistance Charge

20 December – Yahoo! News reported that a key anti-[HIV/AIDS](#) drug distributed in Africa causes drug resistance in pregnant women, but only if they ignore doctors' orders on how to take the pills. The drug, nevirapine, is distributed as part of President Bush's high-profile bid to fight the spread of the disease in Africa and help AIDS sufferers. The announcement confirms in part media reports which suggested single doses of nevirapine, used to stop HIV-positive mothers passing the virus to their babies, could result in resistance to future treatment. Uganda's Makerere University Medical School and two U.S. institutions issued a joint statement "to clarify the scientific facts, based on the full body of evidence." "It is true that resistance has been shown to occur in those receiving short-course nevirapine," said the joint statement in the Ugandan capital. "The problem of drug resistance has partly been as a result of violations in prescription rules. However, to date, there is no evidence of negative clinical outcomes as a result of subsequent antiretroviral therapy," the statement said. The U.S.-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will now run tests to examine the long-term effects of women taking a single dose of nevirapine on their later response to a range of anti-retroviral treatments. [View Article](#)

## Money for Children's Flu Vaccine Diverted

16 December – The Washington Times reported that funds earmarked to vaccinate children are being diverted to pay for experimental [flu](#) vaccines for adults. Some state health officials say

that's not right but federal officials insist the adult vaccines are needed in case flu infections soar this season. The government agreed to buy 1.2 million doses of flu vaccine. To pay, the government will dip into a \$220 million grant program to help give routine vaccinations to children who are not poor enough to be eligible under state Medicaid programs, federal officials said. [View Article](#)

## More Teens Passing Up Marijuana for Oxycontin, Glue

22 December – The Desert Sun reported that the use of marijuana and other illicit drugs declined slightly among teenagers in 2004, but dangerous [inhalants](#) and the highly addictive prescription painkiller [Oxycontin](#) are becoming more popular. The percentage of 12th-graders who reported using any illicit drug during the past year fell to 38.8 percent in 2004, compared with 39.3 percent the previous year. That continued a decline in teen drug use that began in the 1990s. But the study also points out ominous trends in teens' drug use. The use of inhalants such as paint thinner, glue and gasoline increased sharply among eighth-graders in 2003 and continued to rise this year, a sign that inhaling, or "huffing," is rebounding in popularity after many years of decline. Inhaling chemical fumes is most common among younger teens because products that contain them are cheap, easy to find and legal to buy. Oxycontin, which emerged in drug-abuse reports in 2001, is gaining ground among high school seniors, the report says. When surveyors first asked teenagers about the narcotic in 2002, 4 percent said they had used it during the past year. This year, 5 percent of 12th-graders said they had used the Oxycontin. [View Article](#)

## Nearly 30 Percent of U.S. Workers Are Obese

17 December – ABC News reported that nearly 30 percent of American workers are [obese](#), which can reduce their productivity and greatly increase their cardiovascular disease risk factors. Researchers analyzed data on about 2,400 workers collected in a 1999-2000 nationwide health survey. The data revealed that 29 percent of the workers were obese (a body mass index of 30 or higher), compared to a worker obesity rate of 20 percent in a 1988-1994 survey. The study found that 7 percent of the obese employees said they had some form of work limitation due to health or other issues, compared with 3 percent of normal-weight workers. High blood pressure was found in 35 percent of obese workers, compared with 9 percent of normal-weight workers. The study also found that 36 percent of obese workers had high cholesterol levels and 12 percent had diabetes, compared with 22 percent and 3 percent, respectively, among normal-weight workers. The impact of obesity on worker health and productivity was equivalent to adding 20 years of age, the study found. For example, obese workers in their mid 20s and 30s had work limitations and cardiovascular risk factors similar to those of normal-weight workers in their 40s and 50s. The work and health status of middle-aged workers who were obese were similar to those of normal-weight workers who were 60 or older. [View Article](#)

## Source of *E. Coli* Outbreak Traced to Zoo

17 December – Yahoo! News reported that a petting zoo at the state fair was the likely source of harmful bacteria that caused 15 children to contract a life-threatening kidney ailment this fall. The final report by the North Carolina Division of Public Health said the state's largest outbreak of [E. coli](#) in three years, involving 108 cases, apparently originated at the Crossroads Farm Petting Zoo exhibition at the October fair. Though most people suffered milder symptoms,

including diarrhea, 15 children suffered serious reactions to toxins that collected in their kidneys. Four of the 15 children continue to receive dialysis. The owner of Crossroads Farm cooperated with inspectors and his goats, sheep, llamas, water buffalo, camel and zebra were inspected by a veterinarian for contagious diseases before the fair. [View Article](#)

## U.S. Meeting Demand for Flu Shots... So Far

16 December – The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that most states have enough [flu](#) vaccine to meet demand so far this year. One reason is that even those in the high risk category have been reluctant to get inoculated. "About half of people in high-risk groups have not gone out to get vaccinated," Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said. The effects of the shortage have been tempered by the slow start to the flu season, with some states reporting no activity at all, Gerberding said. New York state is one area with widespread flu activity. However, that picture could change swiftly. [View Article](#) (registration required)

## USPACOM

### Bhutan Bans Smoking in World First

17 December – Reuters reported that Bhutan banned [smoking](#) in public and tobacco sales, the first country in the world to do so. The ban by the reclusive, predominantly Buddhist state follows a decision by its national legislature in July to curb smoking to promote national well-being. "A total ban on the sale and smoking of tobaccos has been imposed in the country from December 17," said Lily Wangchuk, a spokeswoman at Bhutan's embassy in New Delhi. "It is for the well-being of the people, to protect the environment and preserve our culture," she said. People who cannot kick the habit can import tobacco for personal use, but at a 100 percent tax. They can only smoke indoors in the privacy of their homes. Bhutanese officials said only an estimated one percent of the country's 700,000 people smoked or used tobacco. [View Article](#)

### Five People in Japan May Have Bird Flu Virus

18 December – Yahoo! News reported that five people in Japan may have been infected with the [bird flu](#) virus but there is no risk they will develop symptoms and no chance of more infections. Blood tests showed that five people who were involved in work such as the culling of chickens after an outbreak of avian flu in Kyoto in western Japan in February had developed an antibody to the virus. "There is a possibility that they were infected from this case but a positive antibody (result) is not enough to reach a conclusion... In any case there is no risk that they will develop symptoms," the ministry said. The Health Ministry said four of the people were workers at a poultry farm while the other person who tested positive was a worker for a livestock hygiene service center. [View Article](#)

### Poisoned Water Sickens 160 in Northeast China

17 December – Reuters reported that at least 160 people have been poisoned by [arsenic](#) in China's northeastern province of Liaoning after waste water from a copper plant leaked into the water supply. The victims were being treated in hospital, the Xinhua news agency said, but it did

not say if anyone had died from the poisoning. "The valves of the plant's waste water recycling pipelines did not function properly, so water containing heavy metals, such as arsenic and manganese, flowed into a nearby well," Xinhua said. Residents said they suffered dizziness, fever, chest pain and weakness; and fowl they had been raising had suddenly died. Workers at the copper plant were also found to have high arsenic content in their blood. [View Article](#)

## Singaporeans Risk Fines in Drive against Dengue Fever

18 December – Reuters reported that Singapore is to fine people who allow mosquitoes to breed in their homes in a bid to curb [dengue fever](#), a sometimes fatal disease that has soared to a 10-year high in the island-state. First-time offenders, previously let off with a warning letter, will be fined S\$100 (\$60.72) starting next February. Repeat offenders will be fined S\$200. Singapore, with a population of just over four million, recorded 8,597 dengue cases by Dec. 17 - a near 80 percent leap over the same period in 2003. Three people have died from the disease this year. [View Article](#)

## Sri Lanka Culls Chickens, Tests for Bird Flu

20 December – Reuters reported that Sri Lanka culled 100 chickens and sent tissue samples abroad for testing for [bird flu](#) as a precautionary measure after eight people died from a flu-like virus, Health Ministry officials said. Initial tests conducted in Sri Lanka came out negative for avian flu, which has never previously been detected in the Indian Ocean island. "Two patients tested positive for influenza B and one for influenza A, but there is nothing to indicate that the patients are infected with the bird flu or influenza H5N1," Doctor Nihal Abeysinghe, an epidemiologist with the Ministry of Health said. More than fifty people were receiving treatment in hospitals along the country's southern coastal belt for severe respiratory difficulties, which medical experts suspect is a variation of viral influenza. "A team of veterinarians visited the village where two deaths were reported and there was a chicken farm nearby. The team suggested we cull the birds as a precautionary measure," he added. [View Article](#)

# USSOUTHCOM

## Update on the Malaria Epidemic in the Dominican Republic

16 December – The Pan American Health Organization reported that despite an intense search for febrile persons in construction sites, hotels, and businesses in the tourist areas in Altagracia province, only three new cases of [malaria](#) have been detected there, thus confirming the success of measures taken. In Hato Mayor, no new cases were detected; nevertheless, house-to-house searches will be conducted to find febrile persons in the affected areas, in order to detect any person with a positive diagnosis who might re-establish transmission. This page contains a data table showing the cumulative cases of malaria for 2004 up to Epidemiological Week 49 (ending 12 December 2004). [View Data Table](#) [View Article](#)

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