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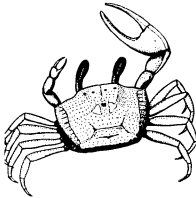


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PUBLIC HEALTH

Protected From Asian Flu

Due to repeated warnings and the availability of vaccine against Asian flu, the U. S. public is well protected against the disease in case an epidemic develops, Faye Marley reports.

► IF THE THREATENED influenza epidemic does develop—the two positively identified cases reported may be the first—the American public is better protected against this disease than ever before.

Perhaps a tenth or more of the population has had flu shots, thanks to repeated warnings and the availability of vaccine against type A or Asian strain of influenza that is feared.

Nearly 40 million shots of vaccine were distributed to the civilian population. This means about 20 million immunized with two shots this season or single booster shots for those protected previously. Add in an undisclosed number immunized by the armed forces.

U. S. Public Health Service officials say that the 1957-1958 epidemic found the nation almost totally unprepared. In October, 1957, only 10 million doses of vaccine were available for civilian use. Since that time, booster shots and the two "first-time" shots have protected millions.

Dr. Delmar Ruthig of the Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, Ga., told SCIENCE SERVICE by telephone that the two cases so far identified as Asian flu were in Baltimore, Md., and in Robeson County, N. C.

"We are not yet ready to call this an Asian flu outbreak," Dr. Ruthig said, "but we have sent representatives to both sections of the country to follow up a possible spread."

In 1961, Dr. Ruthig said, there were two similar cases found, one in Bellingham, Wash., and the other in a community near St. Louis, Mo. But no epidemic resulted.

The fact that the rash of winter respiratory illnesses resembling flu was so late in starting is something in favor of a light outbreak. Also, many of the cases so far suspected because of fever and cold symptoms have been among school children, many of whom have not been vaccinated.

Old people, pregnant women and those with chronic heart and lung disease have been in the high-risk group advised by the Public Health Service to get vaccinations. But in both Baltimore and the North Carolina county, school children have been largely affected. School absenteeism in Baltimore was estimated at 33%.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company and other industries have followed through on PHS advice for vaccination. An unknown number of clinics and private physicians also have given Asian flu vaccine since last fall when it was first recommended.

The Public Health Service points out that laboratories must allow two weeks for tests of blood samples to determine the rise in antibodies before the flu virus can be known. The first sample is drawn as soon as

possible after the illness is discovered. Then two weeks later another sample is taken for comparison.

Local communities all over the United States are reporting suspect cases to their state health departments, which in turn report tests to the Communicable Disease Center.

There is no treatment for Asian flu except the "symptomatic" kind—bed rest, possibly aspirin for fever, simple diet and vitamins. Avoidance of callers by patients is recommended to prevent contagion. Antibiotics are sometimes given for "secondary" bacterial invaders.

• Science News Letter, 83:94 February 9, 1963

TECHNOLOGY

Non-Slip Race Tracks Formed With New Plastic

► MUDDY RACE TRACKS will be a thing of the past with the installation of a new plastic, Tartan, that creates a durable all-weather, non-slip surface.

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Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing

TROTTER TESTED—Stanley Dancer drives Pro Hanover, one of his trotters, in a test of a half-mile training track of "Tartan" brand surfacing material near Mechanicsburg, Pa.