

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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### **Whooping Cough Cases Continue in Southwest Nebraska**

With the growing number of cases, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is working with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Epidemiology on monitoring these cases and providing pertussis education in our health district. Pertussis is known as “whooping cough” because of the “whooping” sound that is made when gasping for air after a fit of coughing, especially in children. Symptoms will vary by age groups.

“SWNPHD has provided information on whooping cough to all schools in our health district that they can send home to parents,” explained Melissa Propp, RN, SWNPHD Surveillance Nurse.

“We are watching these whooping cough cases very closely. Our concern is that pertussis in its early stages appears to be nothing more than the common cold, it is often not suspected or diagnosed until the more severe symptoms appear.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent whooping cough among infants, children, teens and adults is to get vaccinated. This is a good time to review your shot records and make sure everyone in your family is current on their shots. You can contact SWNPHD or your healthcare provider to look up shot records on the state system.

“Although many people would like to know the exact counties and communities that are dealing with the whooping cough, Nebraska law does not allow us to disclose counties of human cases if the population is less than 30,000 residents,” explains SWNPHD Director, Myra Stoney. “We protect the confidentiality of those residents dealing with pertussis.”

Challenges with the cough:

- 1) Severe coughs associated with whooping cough can last for weeks or months and are usually sudden and violent.
- 2) Coughs in teenagers and adults may be hard to distinguish from colds or influenza (flu) as the whooping sound may not be present.
- 3) Whooping cough is easy to be under-diagnosed and easily spread to infants and children.
- 4) Infected people are most contagious up to about two weeks after the cough begins.
- 5) Whooping cough is spread through coughing and sneezing in close contact with others who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria.

“Being up-to-date with vaccines is especially important for families with and caregivers of new infants,” explains Propp. “For more information on prevention of whooping cough contact SWNPHD by calling 308-345-4223 or email: [nurse@swhealth.ne.gov](mailto:nurse@swhealth.ne.gov) .

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, McCook – one block north of Arby’s. You can also follow us on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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