

AGROMEDICINE PROGRAM UPDATE

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Volume 17
No.12
December 15, 2005

Previous issues are available at www.musc.edu/oem/apunews.html

PROGRAM NOTES

>The holidays are upon us! This is the season for expressing thanks to all who have helped to make 2005 a very successful year for the SC Agromedicine Program. Your consultations have forced us to look at the latest literature in many topics and your invitations to speak have kept our stock of presentations timely and up-to-date.

>Please keep both consultations and invitations to speak coming. I enjoy getting to meet groups around the state—despite greater than \$ 2.00/gallon gas prices! If you have suggestions for topics or needs for research on an agromedicine topic, don't hesitate to call.

>Recent "Morning Reports" to our residents on urticating caterpillars and Christmas plant toxicity (summarized later in this newsletter) are available on request to this office (Powerpoint presentations via email).

>For those who wish to contact Dr. Schuman in this

holiday season—his new address is 107 Wescott Dr., Clemson, SC 29631.

BEST WISHES FOR A WARM AND WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON!



RECENT CONSULTS

>Another case of delusory parasitosis has come to our attention. Several faculty members at Clemson have expressed interest in developing a protocol for those who deal with these difficult patients, particularly entomologists and primary physicians. We plan to meet in the new year to discuss this process. If you have suggestions for our discussion, or would like to participate, please contact me.

>Despite cooling temperatures and decreasing relative humidity, mold and mildew continue to generate several consultations each

month. The most frequent recurring theme is failure to deal effectively with the original source of moisture which continues to support mold growth.

>Dr. Tom Harper, allergist, reports a case of anaphylaxis in a young girl stung by large black ants. The family had the presence of mind to collect several ant specimens, but we haven't received them yet. While we await the specimens and possible need for identification by our entomologist colleagues at Clemson, we can speculate that these might be the black cousin of our red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*), *Solenopsis richteri* or the much larger harvester ant. The black fire ant has a much smaller natural range, so is unlikely to be in the state unless transported in potted plants, etc. South Carolina is part of the normal range of the harvester ant (*Pogonomyrmex badius*), so is a more likely culprit. They are 2 to 3 times larger than fire ants with large, wide heads with parallel ridges. Another possibility, one of the velvet ants (not really ants at all,

but wingless female wasps)—usually found in sandy areas.

The answer to our “who done it?” next month!

FROM THE LITERATURE

>Human and Animal Bite Treatment

An excellent, brief review of human and animal bite initial treatment and follow-up was published in the September 1, 2005 issue of Consultant.

--Rivello R, Lavelle KG.

Consultant 2005; September 1: 1091-1100

>Screening for Mesothelioma

Pass et al report the use of serum osteopontin levels to screen those with exposure to asbestos for mesothelioma. While it appears that elevated osteopontin levels are found more often in patients with mesothelioma, the sensitivity and specificity of the test aren't good enough yet to justify its use as a screening test, especially in patients with brief exposure who have a lower pre-test probability of a positive test. In addition, earlier recognition of the tumor has not been proven to enhance survival.

--Pass HI et al. N Engl J Med 2005;353:1564-73

>Hemorrhagic Cellulitis after Ingestion of Raw Oysters

Physicians in Louisiana report a case of hemorrhagic cellulites due to *Vibrio vulnificans* in a 52 year old man who had ingested raw oysters 3 days prior to his

presentation to the emergency room with severe bilateral lower-leg pain and swelling. On the day of admission he developed a bluish rash on his shins which became hemorrhagic over the next few hours. Hypotension developed. He was treated with broad-spectrum antibiotics, multiple pressors and eventually mechanical ventilation. A history of nonalcoholic steatohepatitis was eventually obtained. The patient survived. *V. vulnificans* is a free-living bacterium in warm marine environments which is concentrated in filter-feeding shellfish. Infections occur after ingestion of contaminated food or through skin contact with contaminated water. Persons at high risk are those with liver disease, diabetes, leukemia or lymphoma. Mortality with primary *V. vulnificans* septicemia exceeds 40 percent.

--Falcon LM, Phan L. N Engl J Med 2005; 353: 1604

>Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

Tiensen and colleagues report the 2004 outbreak of HPAI in Thailand. While they have had further HPAI outbreaks and human cases, the description of their experience is enlightening. The good news about HPAI is that while Japan, Korea and Malaysia all had poultry outbreaks in 2004, they have been declared disease-free thus far in 2005.

--Tiensen T et al. Emerg Inf Dis 2005;11(11):1664-72

For a copy of any of the articles discussed in this section, contact our office.

SEASONAL “STUFF”

Holiday plants sometimes prove to be a bit too enticing for our youngest patients. The shiny leaves and beautiful flowers of holiday plants sometimes get tasted, with resulting parental anxiety and, occasionally, significant medical consequences.

In general, all ornamental plants used at this time of the year are gastrointestinal toxins if ingested. So symptoms associated with ingestion are likely to be nausea and vomiting or a mild “stomach ache.”

Two relatively uncommonly used plants that may have more significant toxicity are the Jerusalem Cherry and the Rosary Pea. The Jerusalem cherry is a relative of the tomato than can produce drowsiness, hypere-mic skin, hallucinations and seizures if ingested. The Rosary Pea is sometimes used in Mexican holiday jewelry. The bright red and black pea is non-toxic if swallowed whole, but can produce a life-threatening hemorrhagic gastritis if chewed and swallowed. Mistletoe has a bad reputation, but a leaf or two and/or a couple of berries should cause nothing but a little GI upset.

The bottom line: don't eat the holiday plants unless you want a stomach ache!