



# Messenger

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## GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS SURVEILLANCE

In collaboration with the California Department of Public Health, the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory participates in surveillance of bacteria and viruses that cause gastrointestinal illness. Surveillance activities include serotyping of *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, and shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* as well as strain typing norovirus. Strain-specific information is important to link cases of food-borne illness and ultimately identify outbreak sources.

Earlier this year, *Salmonella* outbreaks were linked to organic walnuts and fresh basil (<https://www.cdc.gov/outbreaks/index.html>). From May to August 2024, a number of *Salmonella* serotypes were detected in San Luis Obispo County: Enteritidis, Agbeni, Agona, Braenderup, Give, Hadar, Newport, and Paratyphi B. Summer months typically have a higher risk of bacterial illness because these organisms thrive under warmer temperatures.



## INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE

On the theme of temperatures, the beginning of fall marks the official start of influenza season. Unlike previous years, our laboratory has maintained influenza surveillance throughout the summer due to concerns about avian influenza (H5N1). H5N1 was recently detected in dairy herds in California, the first land animals in the state with confirmed cases of H5N1, and our laboratory continues to remain vigilant for possible transmission to humans.

We truly appreciate our hospital and clinical partners who submit influenza-positive specimens; data from these submissions inform both disease response and vaccine development. Surveillance testing is a **no-cost service** and can be ordered by adding "Influenza Surveillance" in the comment line on the specimen requisition.

## SPECIMEN QUALITY

At the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory, we are committed to continuous quality improvement of our clinical and environmental testing services. Specimen quality is a critical component of accurate test results and includes such factors as appropriate specimen type and source, collection technique, and specimen storage and handling. Our laboratory is evaluating ways to maintain specimen temperature during transport even

during extreme heat conditions. We are revising our specimen acceptance criteria to align with clinical laboratory testing standards. Additional information will be forthcoming for submitters as we finalize improvements.

### LAB APPRECIATION MONTH

September has been designated as laboratory appreciation month by the Association of Public Health Laboratories. We join in celebrating the vital work that every microbiologist, laboratory technician, and support staff person performs to protect the health and safety of local communities, including our own.



Part of our amazing laboratory team!

### Upcoming Holiday Closures

Friday, September 27—Native American Day

### Questions?

Please contact the Laboratory Director by email or phone.

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