



Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Health, Community Services, Mental Health, Senior Victorians and Housing

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OUR REF: ADD/08/9542

YOUR REF:

Dear Doctor

The presence of Murray Valley encephalitis virus (MVE), (formerly called Australian Arboencephalitis) has been detected in a sentinel chicken flock in northern Victoria. While no human cases have been identified, please be alert to the possibility of MVE in patients who present with a compatible clinical picture, especially those who live in or have recently visited regions in close proximity to the Murray River.

Most cases of MVE infection are asymptomatic, while mild cases present with a febrile headache or aseptic meningitis. Symptomatic infections are usually marked by acute onset, fever in all patients commonly associated with a combination of anorexia, malaise, severe frontal headache, nausea, vomiting and dizziness, with progression to obvious neurological disease such as alteration in mental state, neck stiffness, ataxia and speech disturbances or convulsions. In severe cases coma, pharyngeal paralysis and respiratory failure develop.

Diagnosis depends on seroconversion demonstrated on two blood specimens separated by 7-10 days. Sera for diagnosis of human MVE infection should be sent to the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) (ph: 03 9342 2600).

Expert advice on case management can be obtained from the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service located at the Royal Melbourne Hospital (ph: 03 9342 7000).

MVE virus is a group A notifiable disease, which means that suspected cases should be notified immediately by telephone to the Department's Communicable Disease Prevention & Control Section on 1300 651 160.

Further information can be obtained at the following websites:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/Publishing.nsf/Content/health-arbovirus-pdf-fsmurrayvalley.htm>

<http://medent.usyd.edu.au/fact/murray%20valley%20encephalitis%20and%20kunjin.htm>

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/bluebook/murrayvalley>

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

DR JOHN CARNIE
Chief Health Officer

