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School superintendent says Heppner High School has been hit hard with the flu

By April Sykes

Morrow County School Superintendent Mark Burrows told the school board on Monday night that the flu virus has hit the schools, especially in south Morrow County.

However, Burrows said that except for Heppner High School, attendance is still fairly high. He said attendance in Irrigon Schools is still in the low 90 percent; in Boardman, it's in the high 80 percent; at Heppner Elementary, 87 percent, however at Heppner High School, the hardest hit, attendance had dipped to around 70 percent on Monday. On Tuesday, the absentee rate at HHS was 32.8 percent, the district office has reported.

Burrows said that the district has contacted the Morrow County Health Department who referred them to an epidemiologist who did not recommend

closing schools. He said that as of Monday night, only two staff members at HHS have contacted the flu. As of Tuesday, none had been confirmed H1N1 (swine flu), since only people hospitalized with the flu will be tested for H1N1, according to protocol.

"We will continue to stay in touch with the state health department," he said. He added that if the schools get to the point where half of the students are out because of illness they will revisit the issue. At that point he said that teaching would be disrupted. Burrows said that so far, the flu has seemed to last only a few days

and students can return to school 24 hours after their fever has disappeared. Burrows stressed that students should not come to school if they have a fever.

Concerning finances, Burrows said he had just returned from a trip to Salem concerning the district's financial outlook and reported that the school district's finances look "very good" for the 2009-10 school year. However, he said, "There are some sharks" in future years, especially if the tax measures enacted by the state legislature are repealed by voters. One of those mea-

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HEPPNER

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Heppner residents test positive for Influenza A

According to Sherree Smith, public health director, and Shelley Wight, communicable disease coordinator, of the Morrow County Health Department, six people tested positive over the weekend for Influenza A (not H1N1). Of the six that tested positive for Influenza A, none have become ill enough to be hospitalized.

If anyone who has the flu does become ill enough to be hospitalized, they will then be tested for H1N1 (swine flu) as per state guidelines. The Center for Disease Control has found that 99% of patients that test positive for Influenza A and are later hospitalized because of complications test positive for H1N1. Oregon numbers

of confirmed H1N1 cases are based on confirmed cases found through hospitalized flu patients. According to the Morrow County Health Department, no one has been hospitalized because of complications from Influenza A in Morrow County.

If anyone does develop flu-like symptoms, they are encouraged to stay

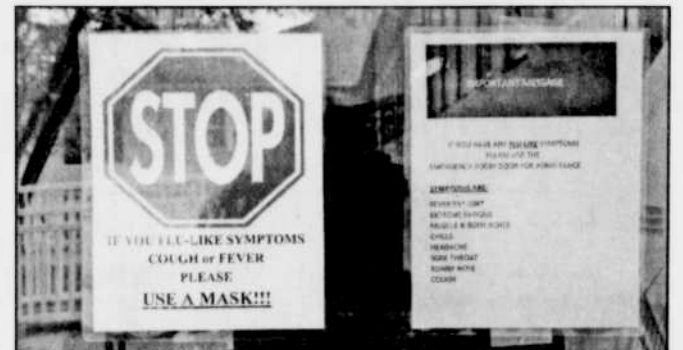
home and not expose other people. Those that find themselves sick are further encouraged to be free of a temperature for 24 hours before returning to work or school.

During this flu season, residents are encouraged to use Kleenex, wash their hands often and use hand sanitizer.

It is definitely flu season

By Molly Rhea, RN, Director of Nursing, Home Health & Hospice

Due to a sudden influx of individuals with flu-like symptoms to the emergency department, Pioneer Memorial Hospital (PMH) is only allowing patients and visitors to enter through the hospital's front (main) entrance or the doors adjacent to the emergency



Signs at Pioneer Memorial Hospital direct visitors with flu-like symptoms to the emergency room entrance. Molly Rhea, director of Nursing, Home Health & Hospice, stated that regular appointments at the Heppner Clinic had been cancelled. Patients who have the flu are asked not to come to the hospital unless they develop complications. The hospital doors are locked and patients will have to enter through the emergency room entrance. -Photo by David Sykes

department, at the back of the hospital. The intention of the restricted access is to keep people with influenza apart from our acute inpatients as well as our long term-care residents.

Influenza A has been evident in south Morrow County since late September. Since October 1 Pioneer Memorial Clinic has seen a trickle of patients come through that have tested positive for the flu. Monday morning, October 12, the clinic had a deluge of calls and people coming to the clinic with flu-like symptoms.

Thus lies the issue. Through all the media coverage people need to remember this is the flu (short for influenza), much like the seasonal flu that goes around every year. And we treat it just like we do every other year. Stay home, rest and hydrate.

Yes there will be a vaccine, hopefully it will arrive in time to prevent some folks from getting the flu, but just like all the other years with the flu shots we urge everyone to get, some folks may get the flu in spite of receiving the vaccine.

What about the anti-virals, like Tamiflu? While we do have a limited supply of this medication available, health officials are stressing these should be used only for patients with co-morbidities or whose immune systems are compromised. Tamiflu does not cure influenza. It may decrease the severity of symptoms and it may decrease the length of time a person is afflicted with influenza by about 24 hours.

Also of note, there are other types of flu in our midst, as well as the common cold. These all need to be treated in the same manner. Stay home - this is important so others will not be exposed to what ever you are coughing. Rest - allow

your body time to recover and mend. Drink plenty of fluids.

The only portals of entry are the nostrils and mouth/throat. In a global epidemic of this nature, it's almost impossible not coming into contact with H1N1 in spite of all precautions. Contact with H1N1 is not so much of a problem as spread of germs is. While you are still healthy and not showing any symptoms in order to prevent proliferation, aggravation of symptoms and development of secondary infections, some very simple steps can be practiced: 1. Frequent hand-washing (well highlighted in all official communications). 2. "Hands-off-the-face" approach. Resist all temptations to touch any part of face. 3. Boost your natural immunity with foods that are rich in Vitamin C. 4. Drink plenty of liquids, some information encourages drinking warm liquids in the theory the warm liquids wash off proliferating viruses from the throat into the stomach where they cannot survive.

If you, or someone in your household has symptoms of the flu (fever, body aches, chills, headache, other chronic illnesses), you need to stay home, rest and concentrate on keeping hydrated. If the person with the flu develops complications such as difficulty breathing, bluish color to skin or lips, coughing up blood, complains of pain or pressure in the chest, appears confused, or gets worse after appearing to improve, please call Pioneer Memorial Clinic at 676-5504, or Pioneer Memorial Hospital at 676-9133 for instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call Pioneer Memorial Clinic. There are nurses available to talk to you and help guide you through this issue.

Gibbs, Day bag big bucks



Garrett Gibbs (left) and Cameron Day (right), both of Heppner, bagged these mule deer bucks during this year's rifle hunting season. -Contributed Photos

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, or email them to editor@rapidserve.net.

County gets some flu vaccines

By David Sykes

As of last Wednesday, the Morrow County Health Department had received 100 doses of the H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine, a Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator told the Heppner Chamber of Commerce last Thursday.

Kristi Wheeler-Johnson told the chamber that the vaccine would be administered first to the following people: Health care providers and law enforcement personnel, pregnant women, new parents of children under six months, people six months to 24 years old and 25 to 64-year-olds with certain medical

conditions.

Johnson said people who fit into these groups should contact the Morrow County Health Department about scheduling their immunization. She said Morrow County had 7,000 people who fit into the group out of a population of 12,000. She said about one half of the 7,000 target group was school age children. She also said she was expecting more doses soon but was not sure when.

Johnson said there were two types of doses-



Kristi Wheeler-Johnson

nasal spray and injections and that they were recommending the two year to 49 year-old age group should be able to receive the mist vaccine.

She also said it has been learned that one dose

of the H1N1 vaccine is now sufficient. It was earlier reported that two doses were necessary.

The symptoms of the H1N1 are coughing and sneezing and runny nose, body aches and sometimes gastrointestinal symptoms. Johnson said the H1N1 is actually a mild disease but because no one is immune, more people are getting the flu.

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MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

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