



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Both flu shot clinics at the fairgrounds and one for children at Chase County Clinic ran out of vaccines Saturday, as area residents lined up for protection against the seasonal flu.

Lori Mendenhall, lab supervisor at Chase County Community Hospital, said they've seen steady growth in the fall flu shot clinic sponsored by the hospital and clinic, now in its third year.

This year's clinic at the fairgrounds had about 100 more recipients compared to 2008.

In 2007, 100 doses were given and at last year's clinic, 160 received the flu shot.

Mendenhall said they had about 250 doses of the flu vaccine for Saturday, and it ran out with about a half hour left in the three-hour clinic at the fairgrounds.

At the afternoon shot clinic for youths up to age 18 held at Chase County Clinic, more than 120 flu shots were given, but about 40 youngsters and their parents had to be sent home without it, said Chris Tomky, R.N.

More vaccine is ordered and will be here as soon as possible, according to the health professionals.

Mendenhall said this year's big increase at the fairgrounds' flu shot clinic is likely due to the other flu virus, the H1N1, that is showing up, as well.

"I think people are more aware this year and want to be better covered," she said.

And, this year, the seasonal flu vaccine is being targeted to a wider group of people, including anyone six months and older, including healthy people and those with chronic medical conditions.

People should get both vaccines this year, because they are different strains, Mendenhall said.

She said the H1N1 flu is expected to be less severe than the seasonal flu, but it's going to impact a different population more severely—youths age zero up to 25 year-olds seem to be the target group, she noted.

"That's why you are seeing such a big push especially for kids to get both vaccines this year," she said.

The flu shot clinic at the fairgrounds had its heaviest run right at 7 a.m. when it opened, Mendenhall noted, but it was steady all three hours.

That was good because the clinic also served as a drill for emergency medical workers to practice for a mass immunization effort, if that would ever become necessary.

"We were very happy with this year's larger numbers. It really helps so we know how much volume we can handle," Mendenhall concluded.

More vaccine coming

While there is no seasonal flu vaccine available now at Chase County Clinic, more is coming, Mendenhall said. The hospital has more on order from its suppliers.

Likewise, Tomky said she is expecting more for the immunization clinic she operates each month in Imperial on the first Saturday. She will announce when another clinic will be held.

Tomky said she was sorry so many youths had to be turned away Saturday, but she has no

control how much vaccine the state sends out for her kids' clinics (age 0-18).

None of the health professionals knew when Chase County would be receiving the H1N1 vaccine.

According to a Monday announcement from the Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services, over 6,100 doses of the H1N1 intranasal spray vaccine has arrived in the state, but the 15 communities to receive it first were not released.

The first shipment of the injectible form of the H1N1 vaccine was expected in the state later this week.