

NHS GRAMPIAN HEALTH PROTECTION NEWSLETTER

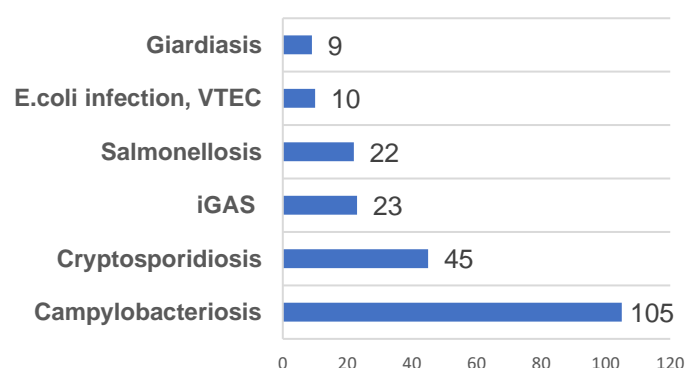
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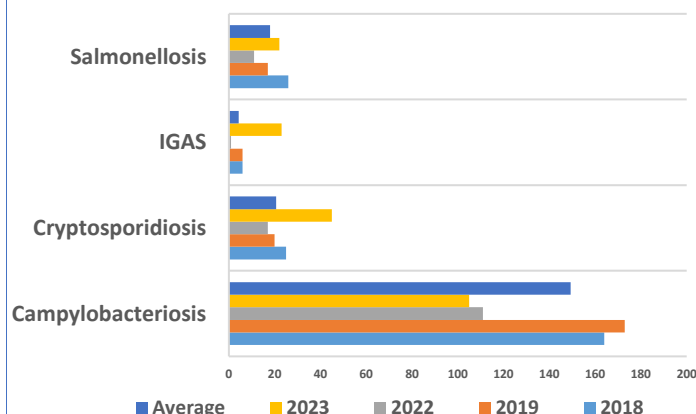
In this issue...

	Page(s)
2023 Second quarter review	1
Water Scarcity	1
Wild Swimming safety	2
Blue-Green algae	3
Advice whilst visiting rural attraction	4
General information	5
Hajj and Umrah Pilgrimage	5
Get in touch	5

2023 Second quarter review

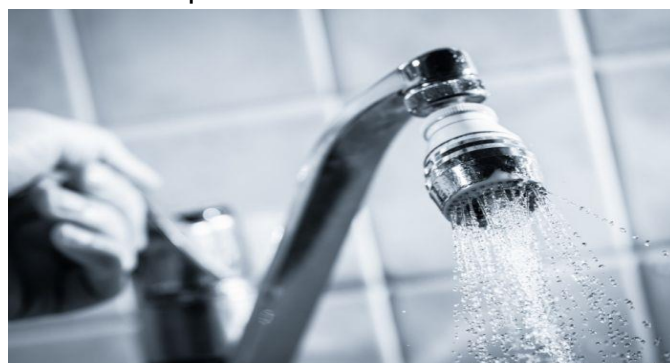


The most common infections notified to the health protection team in the second quarter of the year (April-June), are summarised in the chart above. Campylobacteriosis made up the majority of the cases, followed by a high number of cryptosporidiosis due to an outbreak. Invasive Group A Streptococcal (IGAS) infections and Salmonellosis have also been higher than average in the second quarter of 2023. The chart below further shows a comparison of the some of the infection counts with the second quarter of 2018, 2019, 2022 and an average of the comparator years.



Water Scarcity

While the prolonged period of dry sunny weather across Scotland provides the opportunity to enjoy our wonderful countryside and coastlines, it also poses a challenge to those on private water supplies. The lack of rainfall for such a sustained period, increases the risk of private water supplies drying up. Significant rainfall over a prolonged period of time is required to re-stock some supplies, but this is not expected in the near future.



To minimise the impact on private water supplies, residents are being encouraged to use water wisely and follow these advice;

- Ensure your supply is secure, with no leaks.
- Take timed showers as opposed to baths.
- Harvest rainwater for gardening use.
- Consider moving livestock to an alternative supply.
- Contact neighbours to discuss your contingency plan.
- Hold a significant supply of water that is rotated on a regular basis. (20 litres per day per person).

Where a supply does dry up, then there is support available and there is also grant funding available for improving vulnerable supplies. Where your supply is dry or vulnerable, please contact your local Environmental Health Department for further advice and support.

Wild swimming safety

Wild or open water swimming refers to swimming in a natural pool of water e.g., a river, loch or sea. Wild swimming has become increasingly popular in Scotland and is beneficial for physical and mental health. However, there are certain physical hazards associated with wild swimming including **drowning**, **cold weather shock** and **stings by sea creatures** e.g., jellyfish. You can reduce the risk posed by these hazards if you;

- Check the weather forecast and other conditions like wind, temperature, currents and times of tides before swimming
- Do not swim under the influence of alcohol or drugs as they can impair judgement, coordination or reaction times, and impact ability to identify any potential hazards before or during swimming
- Avoid swimming alone. If not possible, make sure to tell someone where you are going
- Wear a wetsuit or dry suit, suitable for the water temperature and in bright colours for higher visibility
- Plan your entry and exit points carefully
- Avoid sudden immersion e.g., jumping or diving, into cold water
- Stay outside areas where industrial or fish farming activities are being carried out
- Take warm clothes e.g., hat and gloves with you, dry up and dress quickly on a dry spot after swimming.
- Take a warm non-alcoholic drink for after you come out of the water.

There are risks associated with swimming in water with unknown or poor water quality. The presence of bacteria and viruses in open waters can increase the risk of diarrhoea, vomiting and developing a range of **infections** affecting skin, ears, eyes, liver, kidney and respiratory system. Some people are more vulnerable to these infections including the very young, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. These risks can be reduced if you;

- Swim only in designated bathing waters recognized under the Bathing Water Directive
- Check the most recent water or real-time predictions of water quality on Scottish Environment Protection Agency's (SEPA) bathing waters pages
- Check for any signage that warns of blue-green algae or cyanobacteria, and avoid swimming in those water bodies
- Avoid swimming after heavy rainfall as this leads to increase in harmful bacteria entering the water from agricultural land or sewage systems
- Wear a wetsuit to minimise body's contact with the water
- Try not to swallow the water during swimming
- Wash hands after swimming and before eating or drinking

Source: Public Health Scotland. 2023. Wild swimming: how to swim safely in Scotland's outdoor water. <https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/media/20099/2023-06-12-wild-swimming-v1.pdf>

For more information, please visit the following websites;

SEPA Bathing Water – for information on bathing water quality across Scotland.

<https://www2.sepa.org.uk/bathingwaters/Index.aspx>

Water Safety Scotland – for information on drowning prevention and water safety

<https://www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk>

RNLI Open Water Swimming Safety Advice and Tips – <https://rnli.org/safety/choose-your-activity/open-water-swimming#>

Water Safety – Scottish Water – <https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/In-Your-Area/Visiting-our-Reservoirs/Enabling-Responsible-Access/Water-Safety>

Identifying jellyfish – Marine Conservation Society – <https://www.mcsuk.org/what-you-can-do/citizen-science/sightings/how-to-identify-jellyfish/>

Jellyfish and other sea creature stings – NHS- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/jellyfish-and-other-sea-creature-stings/>

Swim healthy – GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/swim-healthy-leaflet/swim-healthy>

Blue-Green algae

This is a reminder for people to be on the lookout for blooms of potentially hazardous blue-green algae (also known as Cyanobacteria) in the area's lochs and rivers.

Blue-green algae occurs naturally in lochs, ponds, reservoirs, rivers and in the sea. Where it is referred to as algae, it is actually many tiny bacteria that can't be seen with the naked eye. During the warmer summer months concentrations can rise and it can form blooms which can release toxins into the water. When they clump together, they form thin wispy streaks, or thick blue/green paint-like scums if the numbers are very large. Contact with blue-green algae can have adverse health effects on humans and animals.



Where the presence of blue green algae is suspected, the advice is to avoid swimming or other water-based activities like canoeing or water skiing. It is really important to keep children and pets from entering or drinking any water suspected of having blue green algae, as they are both particularly sensitive to its effects.

Council environmental health teams work closely with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) where there are reports of possible blue-green algae growth, and place warning notices for members of the public.

However, the transient nature of these blooms and the vast areas of waterways that could be affected mean users must also be aware of possible unmarked affected areas.



For further information on blue-green-algae and how to identify it, go to;

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/bloomin-algae>

https://www.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/BlueGreenAlgae_A3Poster_Print-Ready-CMYK.pdf

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/>

You can also download the Bloomin' Algae app and help monitor blooms across Scotland and the UK at;

<http://www.brc.ac.uk/app/bloomin-algae-app>.

Advice whilst visiting rural attractions

It is definitely both educational and enjoyable to visit a rural attraction site, such as a petting zoo, farm, or animal attraction, and this should be encouraged because it can inspire children from all backgrounds to learn about the rural environment, animals and production of food. However, we should be mindful that animals have 'bugs' that can cause illness in people, some of these bugs live in their tummy and some can be on the body of these animals. Examples of these 'bugs' are Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Salmonella and E. coli O157, which although rare, can cause serious illness.

These illness are usually transmitted through faecal-oral route. 'Bugs' can be passed to your mouth by putting hands on faces, or fingers in mouths after touching animals in the petting and feeding areas. Transmission can also be through contact with animal droppings or contaminated surfaces around the environment, before washing hands thoroughly with running water and liquid soap.

Key Facts

- Remember hand hygiene is important!
- Wash hands with running water before leaving premises (If no access, use wet wipes, but ensure as soon as hand washing facilities become available they are used)
- Alcohol gel/hand rub is not effective against these types of bugs and germs.
- Wash hands after touching or feeding animals or contact with surfaces in animal areas such as fences and gates
- Wash hands after playing on playing equipment
- Wash hands before and after eating and drinking, only eat and drink in designated picnic/café areas
- Wash hands after changing/cleaning footwear
- Supervise children at all times and especially around handwashing



- Clean buggy-bike wheels / outdoor shoes prior to taking indoors
- Do not kiss animals or put your mouth near them
- Avoid contact with sheep and lambs if pregnant
- Cover cuts and grazes with waterproof dressings
- Do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons etc. in mouths
- Do not drink from farm taps unless it clearly states 'drinking water'
- Do not eat and drink while touching animals or walking around animal area nor taste animal foods
- Do not eat food that has fallen to the ground

Checklist of items to take on Visit

- Wet Wipes
- Alcohol gel
- Change of shoes after visit
- Change of clothes

Becoming Unwell After a Visit

If you or your family become unwell or have symptoms of abdominal pain, sickness and/or diarrhoea (sometimes bloody) within two weeks of a rural visit, please get in touch with your local GP or 111 out of hours for advice. Furthermore, if anyone in the family develops bloody diarrhoea, please seek immediate medical advice and inform them that there has been a recent visit to a rural setting.

Useful links from NHS inform for further information

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/outdoor-health/bugs-and-germs/avoiding-bugs-and-germs-outdoors>

E- Coli O157

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/escherichia-coli-e-coli-O157>

Tick Bites

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/injuries/skin-injuries/tick-bites>

Educational Resources to learn about microbes for children

<https://www.e-bug.eu/>

General Information



It is also important to remember that NHS Inform has a huge amount of information about a wide range of infections and has helpful guides if you or someone around you develop symptoms. Moreover, COVID-19 information is still on NHS Inform and is up to date including stay at home advice. Additionally, If you're feeling anxious, stressed, low, having problems sleeping or dealing with grief, check out the Mind to Mind section to find out how you can improve your mental wellbeing by hearing what others have found helpful.

Kindly refer to the websites below to access the most up-to-date information.

NHS Inform; <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>

NHS Inform COVID-19 information;
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>

Healthy know how;
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/healthy-know-how>

Mind to Mind;
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/mind-to-mind/>

Hajj and Umrah Pilgrimage

The dates of Hajj 1444H/2023 is between 26 June and 1 July 2023. Comprehensive advice for those travelling to Hajj all is curated by Public health Scotland through the Fit for travel page which provides Information on how to stay safe and healthy abroad.

The information leaflet which covers what to do prior to travelling, during hajj and after hajj can be accessed at;

<https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/media/670120/hajj-2022-infosheet-english-final.pdf>

Further information is also available at;
<https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/hajj-and-umrah-pilgrimage>

Is there something we should know?



We welcome your input for topics to cover or news to share as we are always working to improve our communication. If you think there is a topic we should be covering or have a piece to contribute, kindly let us know by leaving us your suggestions via the HPT email.

Get in touch

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