



**State of Louisiana**  
Department of Health and Hospitals  
Center for Preventive and Community Health

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Dear Dr. Blaney

Melioidosis is an infectious disease caused by the gram-negative bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, which is a select agent. In November 2014, two non-human primates in a breeding colony at a national primate research center became ill and one died. Pathology samples were submitted to CDC and *Burkholderia pseudomallei* was identified as the cause of infection. Further genotyping revealed that the primates were infected with the laboratory reference strain, which was used in the northern research part of the campus located 1 mile away from the primate breeding colony. During December 19-23, 2014, an investigation was conducted at the research center by CDC/Division of Select Agents and Toxins (DSAT) and USDA Select Agents Program. The federal inspectors were accompanied by personnel from the Louisiana Department of Health and Human Services Office of Public Health, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the university that runs the research center. On January 23, a member of the USDA inspection team developed an illness with melioidosis as a differential diagnosis. The patient's serum antibody titer was consistent with potentially recent or distant exposure to *B. pseudomallei*, raising concerns of a possible exposure during the investigation by CDC and USDA.

This letter serves as a request for a CDC Epi-Aid to assist Louisiana in the investigation of potential *Burkholderia pseudomallei* exposures among non-human primates, and persons employed at or inspecting a national primate research center.

Objectives of the investigation include:

1. Provide technical subject matter expertise in support of CDC DSAT investigation of laboratory biosafety lapse and understand how the NHPs became infected;

2. Review historical risk assessments of animal and laboratory workers at the primate research center;
3. Conduct additional risk assessments, if needed, of potentially exposed personnel as the investigation continues, including center employees and federal and state inspectors;
4. Provide technical subject matter expertise to guide sampling strategy to assess potential *B. pseudomallei* exposures to center employees, local, state, and federal employees, and the surrounding community and to guide recommendations for prevention and control.

Thank you for your support.



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