

4.1 Non-IID Zoonotic Diseases

Leptospirosis

Twenty cases of leptospirosis were notified in 2006, 33% more than were reported in the years 2004 and 2005 (figure 1). All cases this year were male and were aged between 19 and 67 years (mean age, 35 years; median age, 35 years). Ten required hospitalization, one was treated as a hospital out-patient, three were reported as GP patients, and patient type was not available for the remaining six patients. Half of all cases (n=10) were notified in the last quarter of the year.

Four cases were believed to have acquired their illness occupationally, through farming activities. Nine cases reported recent contact with river water, five through canoeing, two through freshwater swimming, one through a river rescue course and one while performing a river rescue. Two cases were associated with foreign travel, the country of infection for both being Thailand. Leptospirosis has been associated with flood conditions, and in the autumn of 2006, Thailand experienced severe flooding. No risk factor information was available for the remaining five cases.

Four cases in 2006 were infected with *Leptospira interrogans hardjo*, including three of the four farming-related cases. One river water-associated case was reported as *Leptospira interrogans icterohaemorrhagiae*, and species was not reported for the remaining 15 cases.

Activities that have been associated with leptospirosis risk include farming, occupations that involve contact with wet rodent-infested environments, recreational activities such as water sports, and flooding. Many countries have reported a change in leptospirosis epidemiology in recent years, with an increasing proportion of cases related to recreational rather than occupational exposures. The variety of possible transmission routes reported here and elsewhere serve as reminders to clinicians to consider leptospirosis when compatible symptoms are observed, not only for patients in occupational groups historically considered at risk.

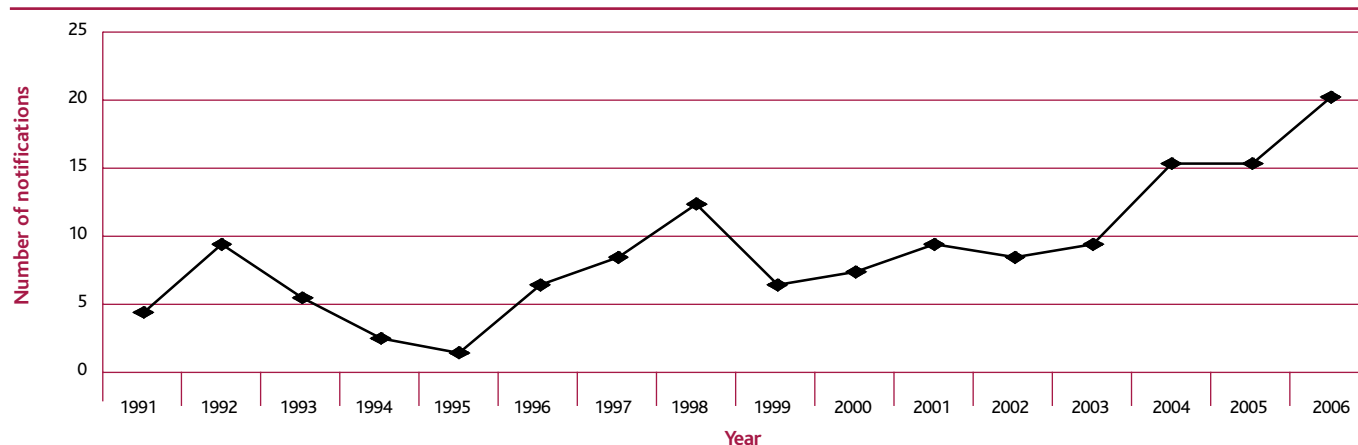


Figure 1. Annual number of leptospirosis notifications, Ireland 1991-2006 (data source: CIDR)