Measles complicates two big Amish events

SHILOH: Visitors from around the world to two upcoming events in Ohio’s Amish country could come away with more than they bargained for: health officials fear a case of measles from the nation’s largest outbreak in two decades. The outbreak, with more than 360 cases, started after Amish travelers to the Philippines contracted the virus, and state health officials said they were concerned because the highly contagious disease spread quickly because of a lower rate of vaccination among the Amish.

Health officials believe the outbreak is slowing in Ohio thanks to vaccination clinics, door-to-door visits by public health nurses and cooperation by the Amish, who quickly quarantined themselves when measles was present. But Horse Progress Days, an international showcase of horse-drawn equipment scheduled for Friday and Saturday, is expected to draw more than 20,000 Amish and others from around the globe. And a large annual auction that raises money to help Amish families pay medical bills for children with birth defects and other health expenses, is expected to draw more than 15,000 Saturday, is expected to draw more than 20,000 Amish and others from around the globe. And a large annual auction that raises money to help Amish families pay medical bills for children with birth defects and other health expenses, is expected to draw more than 15,000 children.

The county has 54 cases of measles and one hospitalization. Most of its Amish were already vaccinated before the outbreak, Wengerd said. The Amish eschew many conveniences of modern life. Their religion does not prevent them from seeking vaccinations, but they have to pay for the visits. "I believe that the Amish are very much concerned and engaged," Wengerd said. The Ohio outbreak is the biggest in the US since 1994.

Overall, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are tracking 529 cases in 20 states, with the next-biggest outbreaks in California and New York, none of which involves the Amish.

AIDS scientist ‘pleads not guilty’ to falsified research

DES MOINES: A former Iowa State University scientist pleaded not guilty Tuesday to charges alleging that he falsified research for an AIDS vaccine to secure millions of dollars in federal funding. Dong-Pyou Han, 57, entered his not guilty plea to four counts of making false statements during initial court appearances in Des Moines federal court. Each count carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

Han was released on bond and his trial was scheduled for Sept. 2. He and his attorney, Joe Herrold, declined to comment after the hearing. Han, who was born in South Korea, was guided through the proceedings by an interpreter in California who attended the hearing by phone.

The only time he addressed the court was to say "yes" when asked if he understood the charges.

The hearing was initially scheduled for last week, but Han’s case was rescheduled after he was hospitalized after getting into a traffic accident in Ohio, where he has been living since resigning from Iowa State last fall. Magistrate Judge Celeste Bremer said Han has indicated he plans to move back to Iowa, where he’ll be under the jurisdiction of federal probation officers, and the judge thanked him for managing to make it to the rescheduled hearing.

"I’m sorry to hear about your car accident and I’m glad you’re out of the hospital," the judge said. According to prosecutors, Han sent a letter to university officials before he resigned last fall in which he confessed that he had spiked samples of rabbit blood with human antibodies to make an experimental HIV vaccine appear to have worked.

He also pleaded not guilty to a break in through in the scientific community. But the alleged misconduct was uncovered last year after scientists at Harvard University discovered the spiked samples. According to the indictment, Han caused colleagues to make false statements in a federal grant application and progress reports to NIH. The NIH paid out $65 million under that grant as of last month. Iowa State and NIH have agreed to pay back NIH nearly $500,000 for the cost of Han’s salary. Experts say it is extremely rare for criminal charges to be brought in cases of scientific fraud, but that Han’s alleged wrongdoing was extraordinary. There have been only a handful of instances over the past 30 years in which criminal charges were brought in cases of alleged scientific fraud. Ivan Oransky, who co-founded Retraction Watch, which tracks research misconduct, recently told The Associated Press. Oransky said charges are rarely brought because the US Office of Research Integrity, which investigates misconduct, doesn’t have prosecution authority, and most cases involve smaller amounts of money. However, he said Han’s case was “particularly brazen.” — AP