

Whooping cough vaccine fails for many

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

As debate simmers nationwide about whether parents should be forced to vaccinate their children, Elk Grove residents have made their choice: Only 80 of the suburb's 4,500 kindergartners opted out of vaccinations last year, state data show.

Despite those precautions, whooping cough ripped through Elk Grove's classrooms and cul-de-sacs in 2014. Infection rates within the large Sacramento suburb were three to five times higher than rates elsewhere in the county, local health records show.

The paradox – high infection rates amid high immunization rates – underscores a disturbing truth about the current whooping cough vaccine: It is wearing off after just a few years, and many Californians who thought they were protected instead are catching the disease.

“Children who were vaccinated did not receive the protection desired,” said Kate McAuley, program coordinator of communicable disease and immunization at the Sacramento County Public Health Department. “We had many high-school-aged children who had pertussis. They had received vaccines. The vaccine is lasting two to three years.”

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