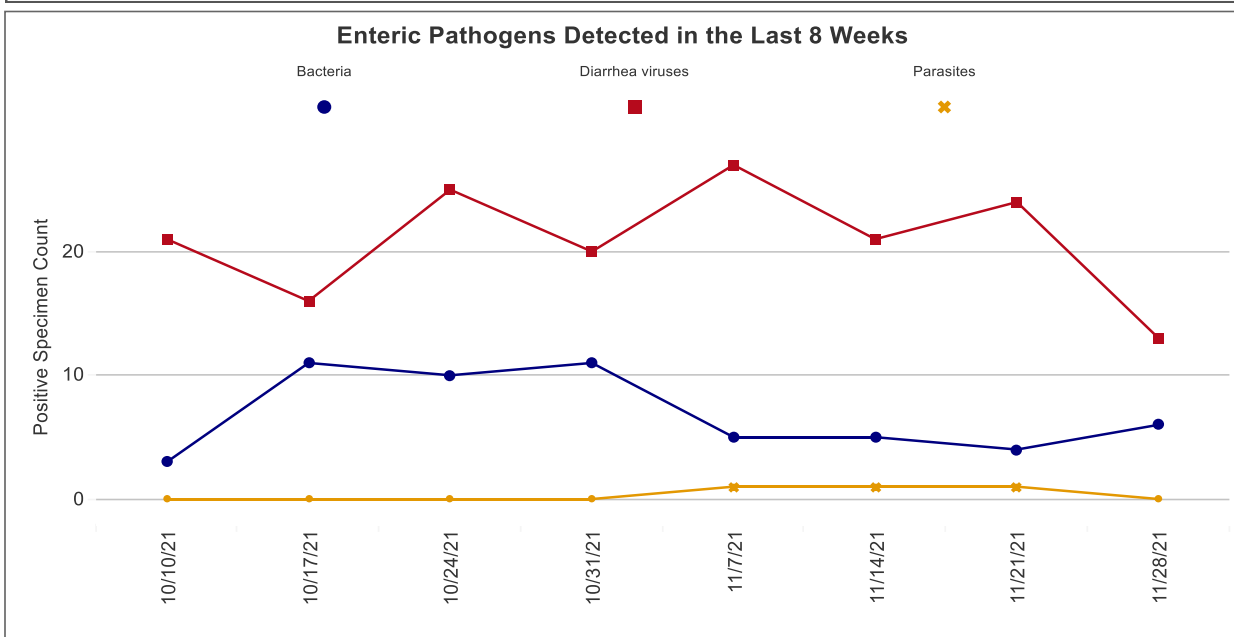
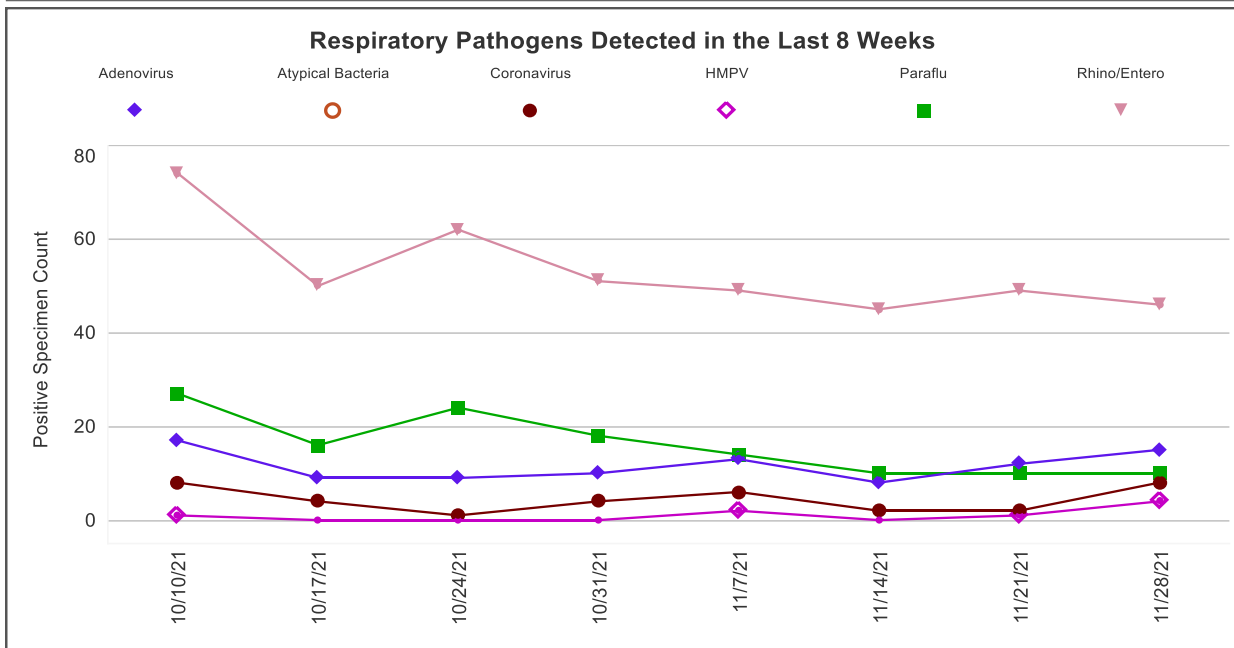
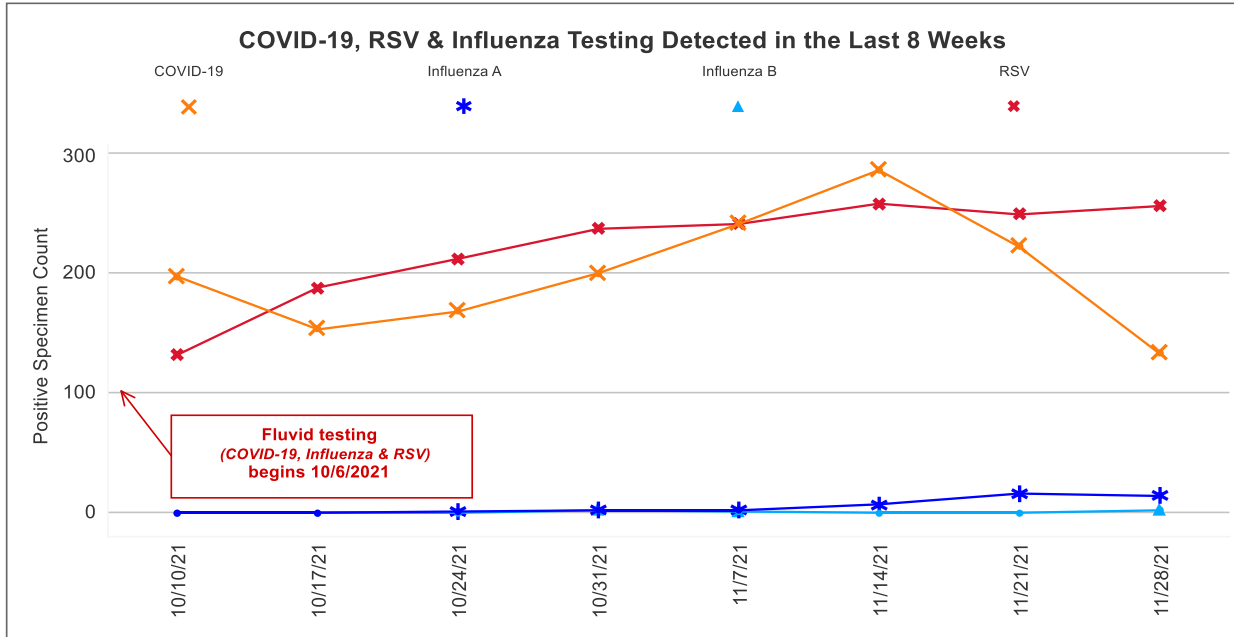


Bug Watch

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Late Breaker: Last week a new SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern, B.1.1.529 or omicron, was found and is now known to be spreading in South Africa. It has subsequently been found in several European countries, Hong Kong, Israel, Australia, and most recently Canada. This variant is concerning because it has 30 mutations in the spike protein, half of which are in the receptor binding domain, and shares some of the mutations seen in the delta, gamma, and beta variants. It is not yet known whether this variant is more transmissible (although this is currently the primary concern), can cause more severe disease, or can evade natural or vaccine induced immunity. Ongoing research and epidemiological observations will hopefully be able to answer some of these critical questions in the next few weeks.



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