Q FEVER

Q fever is a disease caused by the bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*. It can infect both humans and animals, and is most commonly found in cattle, sheep, and goats.

HOW DOES Q FEVER SPREAD TO PEOPLE?

- Contact with infected animals while assisting with the birthing process.
- Breathing in contaminated barnyard dust, as this bacteria can survive for a long time in the environment.
- Consuming raw milk and other unpasteurized milk products.
- Ticks can also spread the infection.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF Q FEVER IN PEOPLE?

Most people infected with the bacteria have no symptoms at all. For people who do get sick, signs are similar to the flu, making a correct diagnosis difficult for doctors.

Common symptoms include:

- Fever and chills
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches

Consult a healthcare provider if you develop these symptoms after spending time with farm animals or in areas where they live. Most cases are treated with antibiotics.

Some people may develop a long-term infection which can be life-threatening and require months of medical care.

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov

Revised 4/29/26

HOW DOES Q FEVER SPREAD TO ANIMALS?

- Contact with body fluids or secretions such as milk, urine, or birthing fluids.
- Like people, animals can become sick by breathing in dust contaminated with the bacteria.
- Ticks can also spread the infection.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF Q FEVER IN ANIMALS?

Most animals do not show signs of illness when they have Q fever. When signs do appear they usually involve the animal's reproductive system. This may include abortions, stillbirths, and death of their young, especially in sheep and goats.

Talk to your veterinarian for guidance on testing your animals. No Q fever vaccines are approved for use in animals in the U.S.

KEY POINTS

- Q fever is rare in Los Angeles County, but can occur in people exposed to livestock.
- This disease typically causes a flu-like illness, but it can lead to serious, long-term health problems.
- Most infections occur during animal birthing or by inhaling contaminated barnyard dust.
- Raw milk and unpasteurized dairy products are another source of Q fever and should be avoided.

County of Los Angeles Public Health

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q FEVER

WHAT STEPS WILL HELP DECREASE EXPOSURE TO Q-FEVER?

If you care for or work with livestock it is important to know that the bacteria that causes Q fever is difficult to remove from the environment. The steps below will help decrease exposure to Q fever. Consult with your veterinarian about appropriate animal care practices to prevent Q fever in your animals.

When handling animals:

- **Use protective gear:** Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when assisting an animal giving birth or when touching the placenta, fetus, or amniotic fluid. PPE should include at least disposable gloves and an N95 mask.
- **Clean up quickly:** Quickly remove and destroy the placenta and other birth materials.

When cleaning potentially contaminated areas:

- **Disinfect surfaces:** Clean dirt from the area first then disinfect using a mix of 10% bleach (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) to kill germs.
- **Manage dust:** Avoid cleaning out buildings or moving dirty bedding on windy days. Lightly spray surfaces with water to keep dust from floating in the air prior to cleaning with a high pressure washer.
- **Wear a mask:** Always cover your nose and mouth when working in dusty areas.

Other recommendations:

- Do not consume raw milk or other dairy products that have not been pasteurized.
- Do not sell manure to the public or use it in garden areas.
- Practice good rodent and tick control around your property.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- California Department of Public Health: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/QFeverFactSheet.pdf
- California Department of Food and Agriculture: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/pdfs/QFever.pdf
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): https://www.cdc.gov/q-fever/about/index.html

For questions or to find a nearby clinic or doctor, call the Public Health InfoLine at 833-540-0473. Open every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ph.lacounty.gov

County of Los Angeles Public Health