

Pseudocowpox

Milker's Nodule

What is pseudocowpox and what causes it?

Pseudocowpox (SUE-doe-cow-pox) is a viral skin disease that causes mild sores on the teats and udders of cattle. This virus can also infect humans and the condition is commonly referred to as milker's nodule.

What animals can get pseudocowpox?

Cattle are the main species that are affected by the pseudocowpox virus. A similar condition exists in sheep called "orf"; however, it is caused by a different virus that does not infect cattle.

How can my animal get pseudocowpox?

Infection with the pseudocowpox virus requires exposure to an infected cow and it is most often spread between cows by humans during milking and on milking equipment. (**fomites**)

How does pseudocowpox affect my animal?

The initial signs of pseudocowpox are small, reddish, raised sores on the teats and udders of cows. This is followed by the formation of vesicles, scabs, and nodules on the udder and teats. The extension of sores often forms a "ring" or "horseshoe" of scabs that are characteristic for pseudocowpox and this occurs over the course of several weeks. Although the disease spreads slowly through milking herds, it is common for the entire herd to eventually be affected. The length of immunity after infection is usually short and reinfection is common.

Can I get pseudocowpox?

Yes. Pseudocowpox or milker's nodule mainly affects milkers and farm workers caring for dairy cattle (**direct contact**) and less commonly, slaughterhouse workers and veterinarians. Small, red, raised, flat-topped spots show up one to two weeks after exposure on the fingers, hands, and arms of the infected person. Within a week, the sores will become lumps that are red-blue, firm, and slightly tender. The disease is usually mild and generally the sores disappear after several weeks. Unlike cows, immunity after infection seems to develop that protects against reinfection.

Who should I contact, if I suspect pseudocowpox?

In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

In Humans –

Contact your physician.

How can I protect my animals from pseudocowpox?

It is very difficult to control the infection of cows within a herd. Sound milking hygiene practices such as effective teat dipping and disinfection of milking units between cows can slow the spread of the virus. Cow to cow spread may also be limited by wearing gloves and disinfecting the milker's hands between cows.

How can I protect myself from milker's nodule?

It is important to wear gloves when milking or handling the teats and udders of infected cows. Other sources of exposure are calf muzzles and contaminated milking equipment. In addition to wearing gloves, you should minimize contact with infected animals and thoroughly wash your hands and arms if contact occurs.

For More Information

Merck Manual. Pseudocowpox at <http://www.merckvetmanual.com/mvm/index.jsp?cfile=htm/bc/71103.htm>

Employee Health Services. Occupational Health Program at <https://occupationalhealth.ucdavis.edu/docs/cattleXXX.html>

Emedicine. Milker's Nodules at <http://www.emedicine.com/derm/topic268.htm>

University of Florida. Infectious Lesions of the Bovine Teat at <http://dairy.ifas.ufl.edu/health.html>

