

Q Fever Query Fever

What is Q fever and what causes it?

Q fever (the Q stands for query) is a disease caused by the bacterium, *Coxiella burnetii* (Cox-EE-ell-uh bur-net-EE-eye). The disease is found worldwide, except for New Zealand. It can cause reproduction problems in livestock and severe respiratory (lung) and liver disease in humans.

What animals get Q fever?

Sheep, goats and cattle are most likely to get Q fever. Other animals that can get the disease include dogs, cats, rabbits, horses, pigs, camels, buffalo, rodents, and some birds.

How can my animal get Q fever?

Animals get Q fever through contact with body fluids or secretions (milk, urine, feces or birthing products [amniotic fluid, placenta]) from infected animals. This may occur from **direct contact**, ingestion (**oral**), or indirect contact through objects contaminated with these materials (**fomites**). The bacteria is very hardy in the environment and can survive for long periods. This can lead to infection by inhaling (**aerosol**) the bacteria from contaminated barnyard dust. Ticks (**vector**) can also spread infection between animals.

How does Q fever affect my animal?

The most common sign of infection in animals is abortion during late pregnancy. However, most animals do not show any signs of illness with Q fever.

Can I get Q fever?

Yes. People usually get Q fever by breathing (**aerosol**) contaminated barnyard dust or by **direct contact** with infected animals while assisting with the delivery of newborn animals. Occasionally people can get Q fever by drinking (**oral**) contaminated milk or from tick bites (**vector**).

Symptoms of Q fever include fever, chills, night sweats, headache, fatigue and chest pains. Pneumonia (lung infection) and hepatitis (inflammation of the liver) can occur in serious cases. In pregnant women, infections can cause premature delivery, abortion and infection of the placenta. In people with pre-existing heart valve disease, endocarditis (inflammation of the heart valves) may occur.

Who should I contact, if I suspect Q fever?

In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

In Humans –

Contact your physician.

How can I protect my animal from Q fever?

Keep pregnant livestock separate from other animals. Burn or bury the remaining reproductive tissues after abortions or delivery of newborn animals to reduce the spread of the disease between animals. Take great care when handling these tissues to avoid your exposure to Q fever. If you suspect Q fever contact your veterinarian for information on how properly to dispose of possibly infected tissue.

How can I protect myself from Q fever?

Avoid contact with the placenta, birth tissues, fetal membranes and aborted fetuses of sheep, cattle and goats. If you are assisting the delivery of newborn animals, wear gloves, masks and eye protection. People with heart valve disease, who have had valve replacements or pregnant women should be especially careful around pregnant sheep, cattle and goats. Eat and drink only pasteurized milk and milk products. There is a vaccine available (in some areas) for people who work around pregnant sheep and goats.

For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Q Fever at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/>

CDC website. Q Fever at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_q_fever.htm

Q Fever
is caused by the bacterium,
Coxiella burnetii
which causes
reproductive problems in
many animal species.



Photos from www.griffith.edu.au and USDA OnLine Photography Center.