

## Chlamydiosis from Mammals

### What is chlamydiosis and what causes it ?

Chlamydiosis (kla-mid-EE-o-sis) is caused by bacteria called ***Chlamydia*** (klam-id-o-fi-la) [previously called *Chlamydia*]. This bacteria can cause respiratory disease, eye infections, and abortions in animals and sometimes humans. It is found worldwide. Many animals that have this bacteria do not show any signs of illness. Humans are rarely infected from animal exposure.

### What animals get chlamydiosis?

Many animal species can have chlamydiosis. Sheep, goats and cats are the most commonly affected. It is less common in cattle and llamas. Other animals species that can become ill include deer, guinea pigs, and mice.

### How can my animal get chlamydiosis?

Animals ill with chlamydiosis, shed the bacteria in their feces, discharge from the nose or eyes, or birthing tissues or fluids (placentas, fetal fluids). Once in the environment, the bacteria can remain for a few days, (or longer in freezing temperatures). Animals that come in contact with these materials (**direct contact**) or eat them (**ingestion**) become infected. The bacteria can also become airborne (**aerosol**) and be inhaled.

### How does chlamydiosis affect my animal?

Pregnant goats or sheep infected with the bacteria will have late term abortions, stillbirths, or early delivery of weak lambs or kids. The dam usually recovers without any complications.

Infected cats can develop swollen eyelids, clear or cloudy discharge from the eyes and nose, and a fever, 3 to 10 days after exposure to the bacteria. The infection usually clears up on its own in 2 to 3 weeks. However, some cats can be sick longer and can develop an infection in their upper (nasal) respiratory tract.

### Can I get chlamydiosis?

Yes. However, it is rare for a person to get chlamydiosis from a mammal. Exposure is most likely to occur by **ingestion** (unwashed hands after contact with ill animal), **aerosol** (contaminated dust or splash from infected animal tissues) or **direct contact** with mucous membranes (e.g., touching your eye with contaminated hands).

Animal-associated chlamydiosis in humans can cause flu-like symptoms, (fever, body aches, headache), reddened eyes, and pneumonia. In severe cases, infection of the heart or kidney can occur. Pregnant women that become infected can abort their baby.

### Who should I contact, if I suspect chlamydiosis?

#### In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

#### In Humans –

Contact your physician.

### How can I protect my animal from chlamydiosis?

Since some animals can have this disease and not show signs of illness, you should only buy healthy animals and replacement stock from sources known not to have this disease. Sick animals should be kept away from other animals to avoid disease spread.

Prevent spread of the bacteria on your farm. The bacteria can be killed with cleaning, disinfection and heat. Keep footwear (boots) clean and disinfected. Clean and disinfect pens where animals have birthed or aborted and keep other animals in the herd or flock away from these areas.

A vaccine is available and may help decrease the number of sick animals however, it will not completely prevent the disease from occurring.

### How can I protect myself from chlamydiosis?

Pregnant women should avoid contact with pregnant or aborting sheep and goats. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling animals.

### For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheet. Chlamydiosis at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/>

World Organization for Animal Health at <http://www.oie.int>

