

Melioidosis

What is melioidosis and what causes it?

Melioidosis (mel-EE-oy-doe-sis), is a bacterial disease that can affect humans and a variety of animals. Infection can result in mild to severe illness, including death. The disease occurs most commonly in tropical or subtropical areas (e.g., Southeast Asia, China, Australia).

What animals get melioidosis?

Many animals, including birds and aquatic species (e.g. fish, crocodiles), can be affected by melioidosis. Goats, sheep and pigs are most commonly infected, but cattle, horses, dogs, cats, rodents, and other animals can also become infected.

How can my animal get melioidosis?

Animals are most commonly exposed by **direct contact** with soil or water containing the bacteria. Infection occurs by entry into wounds or abrasions in the skin, ingestion (**oral**) or inhalation (**aerosol**).

How does melioidosis affect my animal?

The disease in animals can be variable depending on the location of infection. Many animals will have little or no signs of illness; others may have fever, loss of appetite, or swollen glands. Pneumonia, abscesses, lameness, or nervous system signs can also occur.

Can I get melioidosis?

Yes. Humans can get melioidosis from **direct contact**, **aerosol** or ingestion (**oral**) of contaminated soil or water. Rarely, people can become

infected by direct contact with lesions, blood or body fluids (e.g., urine, nasal discharge, milk, feces) of infected animals or people.

Disease can range from mild to severe illness. Symptoms include headache, unwillingness to eat and body aches. Respiratory disease is common and includes fever, coughing (sometimes with blood), and chest pain; ulceration of the nasal passages is possible. Long term infections result in abscesses and draining lesions in the skin or internal organs (e.g., lungs, heart, joints). People with weakened immune systems (e.g., AIDS, cancer, diabetes, etc.) are particularly susceptible to spread of the disease throughout the body (septicemia). If untreated, melioidosis can be fatal.

Who should I contact if I suspect melioidosis?

In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

In Humans –

Contact your physician.

How can I protect my animal from melioidosis?

Since exposure is most common from the environment, minimize contact with soil (e.g., use raised wooden slats, concrete or paved flooring) and provide safe, clean drinking water.

Any animals showing signs of illness should be promptly isolated; contact your veterinarian Thoroughly cleaning and disinfection of animal areas. Vaccines are not available.

How can I protect myself from melioidosis?


Prevention can be difficult because contaminated soil is the major source of infection. Precautions should be taken to prevent contamination of cuts or wounds. Gloves should always be worn around blood or body fluids from potentially infected animals or humans. There is currently no vaccine available to for humans.

For More Information

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

CDC website. Melioidosis at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/melioidosis_g.htm#issue

Melioidosis
is a bacterial disease
with a variety of signs,
that can affect
animals and humans.
It occurs in tropical and
subtropical areas.



Photos from Oregon State Extension and Dr. Stuart A. Thompson, Medical College of Georgia