SARPY/CASS
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FACT SHEET

Q fever

Q fever is an acute febrile illness caused by the bacteria Coxiella burnetii with a wide range of symptom severity and duration. The organism can be found in infected animals' feces, urine, birth products and milk. It is highly resistant to many disinfectants and environmental conditions. It is found worldwide. https://www.cdc.gov/qfever/index.html

Symptoms: About half of the people infected with the bacteria develop symptoms including: fever, chills, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, chest pain, stomach pain, weight loss, and non-productive cough.

Incubation: It takes approximately 2-3 weeks, if a person does become ill, to develop symptoms.

Transmission: Infection can occur when people breathe in dust that has been contaminated by infected animal feces, urine, milk, and birth products. Less frequently, Q fever can be transmitted is by tick bites, ingesting unpasteurized milk or dairy products or through human to human transmission.

Risk groups: Veterinarians and sheep, goat and dairy farmers; veterinarian researchers and people; slaughterhouse workers.

Reportable: Q fever is reportable immediately by laboratories and medical providers.

Diagnosis and Treatment: Q fever can be difficult to diagnose as each person's symptoms can vary. Two antigenic phases are considered as well as a PCR blood test prior to antibiotic treatment. Often times the tests will appear negative for 7-15 days; therefore providers must treat based on suspicion alone with patient history and other supporting clinical evidence. https://www.cdc.gov/qfever/healthcare-providers/index.html

Prevention: Vaccines for Q fever are not available in the United States. People can take attempts to avoid Q fever by avoiding contact with animal feces, urine and milk as those animals can be infected with the bacteria but may see healthy. Avoid consuming unpasteurized milk and cheeses. If you have been diagnosed with acute Q fever and have a history of heart valve disease, blood vessel abnormalities, immunosuppression, or are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about your risk for developing chronic Q fever.