



Q Fever

What is Q Fever?

Q fever is a disease that can be spread from animals to humans. It is caused by the germ *Coxiella burnetii*.

What are the types and symptoms of Q fever?

- Acute Q fever begins with a quick onset of one or more of the following symptoms: high fever (up to 104 - 105 degrees), headache, confusion, nausea, loose watery stools, sore throat, chills, sweats, dry cough, throwing up, muscle aches, general body aches, fatigue (extremely tired), stomach pain and chest pain.
- Chronic Q fever, an infection that lasts more than six months, is not as common, but is more serious. The main symptom of chronic Q fever is infection of the heart valves (endocarditis).

How soon will symptoms of Q fever develop (incubation period)?

The incubation period for Q fever depends on the number of germs that infect the person. Only about one-half of all people infected will show signs of the illness. The people who become sick do so within two to three weeks after being infected.

How is Q fever spread?

Most people get Q fever by breathing in the *C. burnetii* organism from contaminated dust, usually in a barnyard where there are infected animals. The people at higher risk for getting Q fever are farmers, sheep and dairy workers, meat processing plant workers and animal doctors.

Which animals carry the *C. burnetii* germ?

Sheep, goats and cattle are most likely to have *C. burnetii*. It has also been found in a wide variety of livestock and some pets. Infected animals shed this germ in their urine, feces, birth fluids and milk.

How do you treat Q fever?

Antibiotics are used to treat Q fever and are most effective if started within the first three days of getting sick.

Could Q fever be used as a bioterrorist weapon?

Yes. *Coxiella burnetii*, the germ that causes Q fever, is very infectious and is resistant to heat, drying and some disinfectants. It can be spread through the air and inhaled.

For more information on Q fever, call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777, visit our website at www.guilfordcountync.gov or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov

Free language assistance is available upon request.