



Q Fever Fact Sheet

What is Q Fever?

Q Fever is a disease caused by infection with *Coxiella burnetii* bacteria.

How common is it?

Hundreds of cases of Q Fever are notified to Australian health authorities each year, mostly in New South Wales and in Queensland. In Western Australia, less than 30 cases of Q Fever per year have been notified since 1990. Most of these cases have been associated with abattoir workers or farmers.

How is it spread?

People usually contract Q Fever from infected animals by inhaling airborne droplets of urine, milk, faeces or birth products that contain *C. burnetii* bacteria. Sheep, cattle, goats, cats, dogs, bandicoots, feral rodents, kangaroos, birds and ticks can transmit Q Fever. Occasionally, Q Fever can be contracted by ingestion of unpasteurised milk from an infected animal or by inhaling dust from wool, hides or straw that contain *C. burnetii* bacteria. Person-to-person spread by infected semen has also been reported.

What are the symptoms?

Q Fever usually causes fever, chills, headache, sweating, muscle pains and weakness. It can also cause pneumonia, hepatitis, and endocarditis (infection of the heart valves), which can be life-threatening.

What is the treatment?

Q Fever can usually be cured by antibiotic therapy. However, endocarditis may require surgery.

How do I avoid catching it?

Q Fever can be avoided by avoiding contact with potentially infected animals (e.g. sheep, goats, kangaroos, cattle) or by vaccination.

Who should be vaccinated against it?

People at increased risk of Q Fever infection who should consider vaccination against Q Fever include abattoir workers and those closely associated with the meat processing industry (e.g. contractors to abattoirs); meat processing workers; veterinarians; pelt and hide tanners; professional shooters supplying the meat industry (e.g. professional kangaroo shooters); sheep shearers, sheep and cattle farmers; and dairy farmers.

How do I get vaccinated against it?

Q Fever vaccination is available from doctors and nurses who have been trained in Q Fever testing and vaccination. An up-to-date list of Q Fever vaccination providers is available from CSL by phoning 9328 7322.

You must have a blood test and a skin test before you are vaccinated against Q Fever to avoid significant side effects from the Q Fever vaccine (e.g. injection site abscess, fever, sweating, headache, muscle pains, tiredness).

Where can I get more information?

For more information on Q Fever vaccination, ask your employer (if you are a meat worker), visit the Australian Q Fever Register at <http://www.qfever.org/>, phone the Register on 1300 733 837, phone CSL Ltd. on 9328 7322, or phone your local Population Health Unit or the Communicable Disease Control Directorate on 9388 4878.