

Why should you give a Q?

Q fever is an important infectious disease because it can cause serious illness in people. While Q fever rarely causes clinical disease in livestock, all farmers, farm workers, agents and other people exposed to sheep, cattle and goats can be impacted.

For some people, Q fever may present as a mild infection similar to the flu. But the severity of the illness varies and some people can develop serious symptoms involving the lungs, liver, heart or brain. About 10 per cent of people seriously ill with Q fever don't return to normal in 12 months.

Common symptoms include:

- rapid onset of high fever and profuse sweats
- extreme fatigue, muscle and joint pain
- severe headache and photophobia.

Who is at risk?

Abattoir workers, farmers, stockyard workers, shearers, animal transporters, and others exposed to cattle, sheep and goats or their products.

How do you catch it?

It is very easy for people to catch Q fever.

Q fever can survive in air, soil, water and dust, and also on items such as wool, hides, clothing, straw and packing materials. Animals are infected by inhaling or ingesting infected materials such as urine, milk, faeces or after-birth from infected animals.

People generally catch Q fever through:

- ingestion of infected dust particles
- contact with infected animal waste products
- contact with soiled straw or wool
- handling of infective placental tissue such as afterbirth
- consuming infected un-pasteurised milk.

Can it be prevented?

Vaccination is highly recommended for people working in the livestock industry.

Tip: To find a vaccinator near you visit www.qfever.org/findavaccinator.

You and your employees can also check your immunity status by undergoing a pre-screening by a registered Q fever vaccine provider.

You can also help reduce the spread of Q fever by:

- washing hands and arms in soapy water after handling animals or carcasses
- washing animal body fluids from work sites and equipment
- minimising dust and rodents in slaughter and animal housing areas
- keeping yard facilities from sheep and cattle well away from domestic living areas
- removing protective and/or other clothing that may carry infectious material before returning to the home environment
- properly disposing of animal tissues including afterbirth.

For more information, contact Livestock Health & Biosecurity Victoria's Catherine James on 0418 360 470, cjames@vff.org.au or on Twitter @vff_LHBV.

