

Q fever

Q fever is an illness caused by a germ carried by animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, kangaroos and other marsupials, even cats and dogs. The germ can stay in dust and soil for many years.

If you feel unwell, please see your doctor.

If you are very sick (eg. chest pain, short of breath), **call 000** and ask for assistance.

Symptoms

Although most people with Q fever have a mild illness, some can get very sick. Q fever can cause pneumonia or inflammation of the liver (hepatitis).



High fever, tired, chills and sweats



Nausea, vomiting and weight loss



Headache



Shortness of breath, chest pain and tummy pain

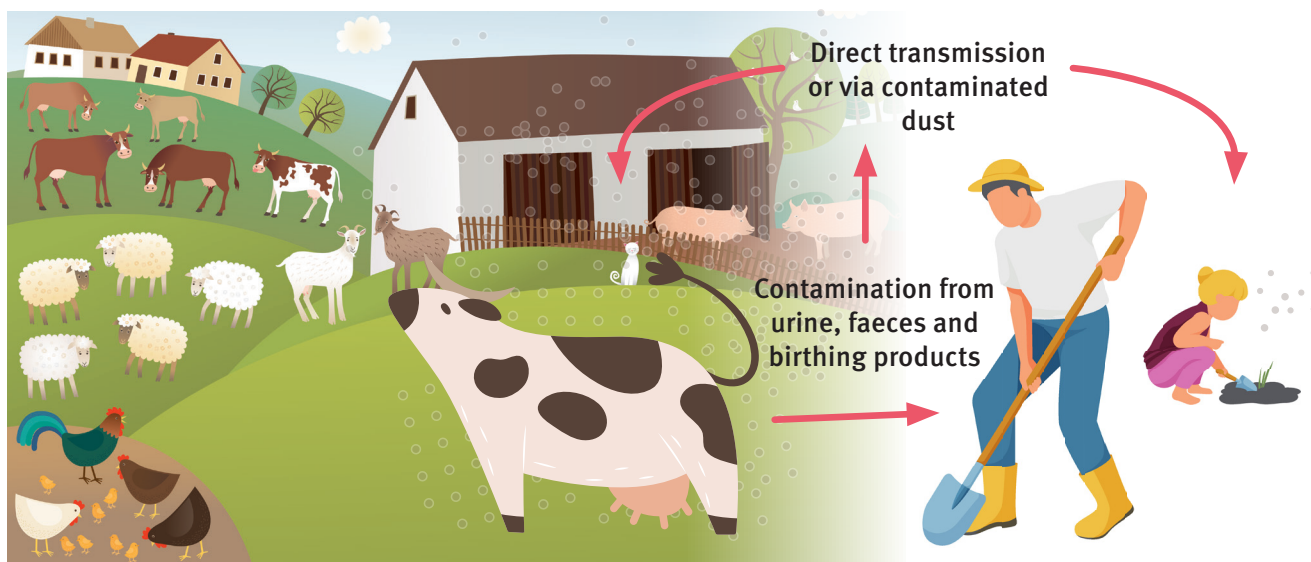


Yellow skin and eyes



Women who are infected with Q fever during pregnancy may be at risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth, or low birth weight.

Catching Q fever



Catching Q fever

- + Watching animal births
- + Touching animal tissues especially birth products (placenta, birth fluids)
- + Touching poo, urine (pee), milk or blood from an infected animal
- + Drinking raw (unpasteurised) milk
- + Touching contaminated clothes and boots
- + Breathing in dust that contains the Q fever germ, e.g. by:
 - + Living close to farms and meatworks
 - + Visiting places that have animals (e.g., farms, meatworks and animal saleyards)
 - + Lawnmowing / gardening (e.g. if the land has kangaroos)
- + Ticks can also transmit Q fever.

Activities with a risk of catching Q fever

People working in certain jobs have a higher chance of catching Q fever. These include vets, vet nurses, meat processing workers, stockyard workers, livestock farmers, wildlife and zoo workers, shearers, animal transporters, professional dog and cat breeders, animal refuge workers.

Treatment

Q fever can be treated with antibiotics and most people get better. In some people the symptoms may persist and lead to severe tiredness which can last from months to years.

People who have heart valve problems, a weakened immune system or pregnant when they become infected may get chronic (or long term) Q fever. This can be a very severe disease and can be difficult to treat. Chronic Q fever can cause death.

Prevention



Vaccination



Wash your hands after touching animals / animal products and before eating / drinking



Wear protective gear when doing high risk activities



Shower and change clothes and shoes after at risk activities



Eat and drink only pasteurised products

There is a Q fever vaccine available for people aged 15 years and older. If you work, live or holiday near animals who may carry the germ, talk to your doctor about getting a Q fever vaccine.