

Q Fever Fact Sheet

Safety measures and personal protective equipment for animal caretakers to reduce the risk of Q fever when working in infected or potentially infected herds or flocks while abortions are occurring:

People who work with goats, sheep or cattle have often been previously exposed to the bacteria that causes Q fever (*Coxiella burnetii*), and may or may not have symptoms of disease at that time. Symptoms of Q fever include high fever (to 104 – 105 degrees), chills, sweating, severe headache, weakness, nausea, vomiting, a dry cough, and abdominal or chest pain.

When there are concerns about a possible Q fever outbreak, it is important that everyone working with animals take steps to reduce the risk of infection, but it is particularly important for new workers or visitors who have never been exposed to bacteria that causes Q fever.

Q fever is very difficult to prevent because just a small number of the bacteria can cause infection. These are some of the things you can do to reduce the risk of exposure to Q fever when working with potentially infected animals:

- 1) Wear a properly fitted respirator mask* (N95 or higher rated) that will effectively filter out bacteria that may be present in the air:
 - When assisting with animals giving birth.
 - When handling aborted fetuses, placentas and other birth products.
 - During activities that create a dusty environment around high risk animals, such as:
 - moving livestock (animals).
 - moving bedding material, especially material used in birthing pens.
 - cleaning barns or animal areas.
 - working with manure and compost piles.

*Talk to your doctor first about whether it is safe for you to wear a respirator.
- 2) Use eye protection such as safety glasses, goggles, or face shields to reduce exposure to splatter when assisting with animals giving birth and whenever splashes or sprays are likely to occur.
- 3) Wear disposable gloves when assisting with animals giving birth and or handling materials used when giving birth. Arm guards/shields are also recommended during invasive birthing procedures.
- 4) Wear protective clothing (e.g.. washable or disposable coveralls).
 - Change your clothes and shower as soon as possible after working with the animals or handling infectious materials.
 - Wash contaminated clothing in hot water and dry by machine separately from family laundry and any other clothing.
- 5) Wear rubber boots that can be cleaned and disinfected or are dedicated footwear (footwear that is only worn onsite) to prevent spread of infectious materials from animal areas.
- 6) Wash your hands thoroughly with sanitizing soap and water after contact with animals and their environments.
- 7) Do not eat, drink, or smoke in animal areas.
- 8) Seek medical attention right away if you become ill with fever and flu-like symptoms, and tell your healthcare provider that you work with animals and may have been exposed to Q fever.

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