

Q fever

Q fever is a bacterial infection caused by *Coxiella burnetii*. It can result in acute or chronic illness in humans, and is usually acquired after contact with infected animals or exposure to contaminated environments. The primary reservoirs are cattle, sheep and goats. Infections result from breathing contaminated droplets from infected animals or consumption of products (raw milk). Acute Q fever can be accompanied by a host of symptoms, including high fevers, severe headache, malaise, myalgia, chills, sweats, nausea, vomiting, non-productive cough, diarrhea, abdominal pain and chest pain. Most people recover from acute Q fever infection, but some (<5%) develop chronic illness, which often manifests as endocarditis. Infection can be treated with antibiotics.

Up to 3% or 4% of the general population and 10% of people with a history of extensive livestock handling will test positive for Q fever at any given time, due to past lifetime exposure.

Q fever reports are rare in Oregon; in 2010 there were three incident cases. Elsewhere in the world, over 200 cases of acute Q fever have been reported among U.S. military personnel deployed to Iraq since 2003. A Q fever outbreak in the Netherlands is well into its fifth year, with more than 4,000 cases reported since 2007. More than 35,000 sheep and goats have been culled as part of the eradication efforts.

Q fever by year: Oregon, 2000–2010

