



Zoonoses

What is the issue?

Zoonoses are diseases that are transferable to humans from animals. They include leptospirosis, Q fever, salmonellosis, toxoplasmosis, hydatid disease, ringworm and anthrax.

Why is it an issue?

People working with livestock, including those working in the dairy, may be exposed to possible infections.

What are the consequences of ignoring it?

Zoonotic diseases can be contracted from contact with: animal wastes; the improper handling of infected animal products; the handling of infected animals; contact with their blood, saliva and urine; and the inhalation of airborne dust.

The effect of these diseases varies. They include severe flu-like symptoms (leptospirosis and Q Fever), gastroenteritis (salmonellosis) and may affect the unborn child of a pregnant woman (toxoplasmosis from contact with cat faeces) or cause the death of a worker (hydatid disease).

How safe is your dairy now?

You and your workers should be vaccinated against Q fever and livestock against leptospirosis, and there should be steps in place to immediately treat and disinfect cuts, abrasions and animal bites.

What can be done right now?

Good animal husbandry and hygiene practices are essential in any dairy. For instance:

- pregnant women should not come into contact with cat faeces;
- avoid contact with animal wastes, carcasses, excretions and offal;
- remove dead stock;
- make sure animal wastes don't come into contact with human food and drinking water;
- do not eat raw meats or unpasteurised dairy products;
- wash your hands before eating, drinking and smoking; and
- treat and disinfect cuts, abrasions and animal bites immediately.

If animal carcasses and waste must be handled, ensure the workers have the appropriate clothing and equipment, such as aprons, rubber boots, gloves, goggles and other skin protection. As always, this personal protective equipment needs to be regularly maintained or replaced to remain effective.



Safety in the Dairy - Hazard sheet

All workers need to be screened for their susceptibility to Q fever before vaccination, as vaccination can cause a severe reaction in someone who has previously been exposed to the illness.

Cattle should be vaccinated for leptospirosis.

In the case of ringworm, avoid contact with animals with skin lesions and always wash your hands after handling cattle. If infected, seek treatment from a medical practitioner.

Dust often carries airborne bacteria, so if you can't reduce the amount of dust in a workplace, make sure anyone working in a dusty area is wearing a suitable dust mask to prevent them inhaling it and possible infections.

Any taps that run water not suitable for drinking must be clearly marked.

What are the next steps?

Provide hand-washing facilities for everyone working in the dairy.

What you should be considering longer term

When designing a dairy shed, ensure it can be easily cleaned, and has good airflow, readily accessible hand-washing facilities and lots of natural light, and install splash guards to protect workers from urine splashes.

What actions are not optional

Q fever is a Notifiable Infectious Disease under the *Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001*. Medical practitioners and laboratories that diagnose cases of Q fever must notify the Department of Human Services in writing within five days.

When a person is diagnosed with Q fever and is admitted to hospital for immediate treatment, their employer must notify the Victorian WorkCover Authority on becoming aware of this, under the *Occupational Health and Safety (Incident Notification) Regulations 1997*.

Suspected cases of anthrax should be reported immediately to a veterinarian or the Victorian Department of Primary Industries. Do not handle suspect carcasses.

Where to go for more information

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Population Health Division	www.immunise.health.gov.au/qfever
The Australian Immunisation Handbook, 8th Edition, 2003	www.immunise.health.gov.au



Safety in the Dairy - Hazard sheet

Victorian Department of Human Services Q Fever Zoonoses	www.health.vic.gov.au www.health.vic.gov.au
Pfizer Animal Health Leptospirosis	www.pfizeranimalhealth.com.au
WorkSafe Victoria Q fever Guidance Note	www.workcover.vic.gov.au