

Brucellosis

Fact Sheet



Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention

An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

John E. Baldacci, Governor

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Suspicion of infection is reportable immediately by phone to 1-800-821-5821

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a disease that can affect many species of animals, including cattle, buffalo, bison, pigs, sheep, goats, elk, dogs and horses. Four species of brucella many infect humans, *B. abortus* (from cattle, bison), *B. suis* (from swine, cattle, bison), *B. melitensis* (from goats) and rarely, *B. canis* (from dogs). Brucellosis is also known as Undulant Fever, Malta Fever, and Mediterranean Fever.

What are the symptoms of brucellosis?

Symptoms of brucellosis may be non-specific, including sustained or irregular fever of variable duration, headache, weakness, sweats, chills, arthralgias, malaise, weight loss, depression and generalized aching. Symptoms usually appear 1-2 months after exposure, but may appear any time between 5 days and several months after exposure.

How is it spread?

Brucellosis is spread to humans by direct contact with living or dead infected animals including secretions, tissues, blood, urine, vaginal discharges, aborted fetuses, and especially, placentas. Animals become infected through ingestion of contaminated discharges, food or water. Humans become infected by direct contact with mucosal surfaces or non-intact skin; ingestion of raw milk and dairy products; and inhalation of contaminated aerosols, especially in the laboratory setting. There is no evidence of person-to-person transmission.

Approximately 100 cases are seen each year in the United States.

A bioterrorism attack using *Brucella* spp. is possible because of the organism's ability to spread by inhalation of contaminated aerosols, as is demonstrated by cases occurring in the laboratory setting. All handling of brucella organisms must be done at biosafety level 3.

How is brucellosis diagnosed?

The state Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory can test for brucellosis in humans. Contact the Maine Department of Agriculture, State Veterinarian for information on testing of livestock.

How is brucellosis treated?

Antibiotics can be used to treat brucellosis. Vaccination is available only for livestock. Dairy cows are vaccinated at approximately 2 months of age. National efforts are underway to eliminate brucellosis from animal herds.

How can you prevent brucellosis?

Humans should not consume raw milk or eat cheese made from unpasteurized milk. Hunters should use appropriate protective equipment when handling feral swine.

Where can I get more information?

For more information contact your healthcare provider or local health center. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - <http://www.cdc.gov> - is another excellent source of health information