

Prepared by

NORTHERN
RIVERS
DIVISION OF

**GENERAL
PRACTICE**



Protect yourself against Q Fever

Q fever is a common infection in the Northern Rivers region, especially amongst people who deal with cattle. Evidence shows about one in four people who have had direct dealings with cattle in this region for more than a few years will have had Q fever.

Vaccination for Q fever is safe and effective and is the only way to adequately protect yourself if you are at risk.

How do people become infected?

Infected cattle, sheep, goats and rarely some other animals are the source. It is spread by direct contact with the infected animal and other contaminated materials such as wool, straw and fertiliser. People become infected mainly by inhaling droplets that contain the organism or by inhaling contaminated dust, especially in association

with slaughtering and birth products.

The organism is resistant to heat, drying and sunlight. Dust contaminated by blood, urine, faeces and birth fluids can remain highly infectious for long periods. People can also become infected by drinking contaminated raw milk. Transmission by ticks has been reported but is very rare.

How does it affect people?

Q fever has a wide range of severity. Some people have no illness. Others are ill for a day or so with symptoms dismissed as a virus. Others have severe illness including fever, sweats, severe headache, muscle pain, profound fatigue and cough. Untreated, the acute illness typically lasts for about three weeks. It can sometimes result in hospitalisation and many organs can be involved, including lungs, liver and heart valves. Some people

report prolonged tiredness and recurrent fevers and headaches after recovery from the acute illness. Infection results in lifelong immunity.

The organism is sensitive to certain antibiotics, and treatment of the acute illness may hasten recovery and help prevent chronic illness.

Who is at risk?

People at risk include abattoir workers, saleyard workers, farmers and their families, cattle inspectors, livestock carriers and veterinary personnel. These people in particular should see their GP to discuss vaccination.

BETTER
HEALTH THROUGH
UNDERSTANDING



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