

# Q Fever

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## What is Q Fever?

Q fever is an infectious disease of sheep, goats, cattle and people caused by the bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*. It is a common cause of abortion in ruminants.

## Which animals are affected?

Besides ruminants, other animals such as camels, dogs and cats can be infected.

## Can people be infected?

Yes, it usually causes a mild flu-like illness, but can lead to more severe disease.

## How can I recognize abortion is due to Q fever?

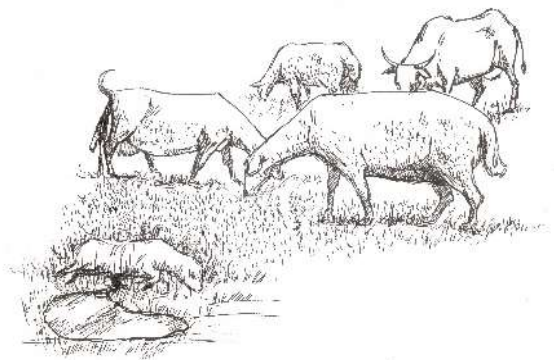
Abortion or stillbirths occur in late pregnancy. Infected animals show no clear signs of the disease, but some animals show depression and lack of appetite one to two days before abortion.

## How can I recognize Q fever in people?

In people, infection does not always lead to clinical signs, but symptoms are usually flu-like, including fever, headache, muscle pain, confusion, sore throat, chills, sweats, non-productive cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, chest pain, and/or hepatitis.

## How is Q transmitted in animals?

- Contamination of the environment mainly occurs through infected material, particularly vaginal secretions, placenta, amniotic fluids, and other products of conception.
- The bacteria are very resistant to drying out and therefore can survive many months in the environment.
- Sheep and goat typically acquire Q fever through exposure to other infected animals, either through direct contact with infected materials or exposure to airborne infectious material.
- Ticks can play a significant role in the transmission of *C. burnetii* in wildlife, especially in rodents and wild birds.



**Risk:** grazing in contaminated pasture



**Risk:** assisting animals during delivery

## How is Q fever transmitted to humans?

- The main routes of transmission are from livestock and companion mammals either through the environment or through direct contact.
- People get infected through inhalation of contaminated airborne infected material or dust containing microorganisms shed by infected animals.
- Direct contact with infected animals, such as the body fluids of infected animals or other contaminated material such as aborted fetuses and placentas can result in transmission, particularly whilst assisting with the delivery of newborn animals.
- Handling contaminated wool, manure or clothes contaminated with feces can also cause infection.
- Less commonly, Q fever can be transmitted through consumption of unpasteurized milk.

## How can I prevent the disease in livestock?

- Placental tissue and aborted newborns must be disposed of by incineration or burial in order to prevent their ingestion by domestic or wild carnivores, which may disseminate the disease.
- Vaccines for *C. burnettii* are not available in Ethiopia

## What can I do to protect myself and my family from Q fever?

- Wear protective clothing (if possible masks and gloves) during cleaning and drying newborns covered in birth fluids or when touching any birth materials.
- Cover cuts and skin abrasions with waterproof dressings.
- Pregnant women should not assist in delivery of lambs, kids or calves.
- Do not drink unpasteurised milk

### Contacts

Gezahegn Alemayehu, [ILRI, gezahegn.alemayehu@cgiar.org](mailto:gezahegn.alemayehu@cgiar.org)  
with contributions from Biruk Alemu, Hiwot Desta, and Barbara Wieland

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