



CALHOUN COUNTY

Public Health Department

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Fact Sheet

Brucellosis

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease primarily passed among animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and deer. Other types of animals can also be infected. Humans become infected by coming in contact with animals or animal products that are contaminated with these bacteria.

What are the symptoms of brucellosis?

In humans, symptoms of brucellosis include intermittent or irregular fever, headache, weakness, profuse sweating, chills, weight loss, physical weakness or fatigue, and general body aches. Infection of organs including the liver, the central nervous system, the lining of the heart, and the spleen may also occur. The disease in humans persists for several weeks or months and may get progressively worse or never go away. Brucellosis can also cause long-lasting or chronic symptoms, including recurring fevers, joint pain, swelling of organs and muscles, depression, and fatigue.

How is brucellosis spread?

Humans are generally infected in one of three ways: eating or drinking something that is contaminated with the bacteria, breathing in the organism, or having the bacteria enter the body through skin wounds. The most common way to be infected is through unpasteurized milk and dairy products from diseased cows, sheep, and goats.

Person-to-person infection is rare, though it can be transmitted through breastfeeding or sexual activity.

How common is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is rare in humans in the United States, there are usually between 100-200 cases each year. Most cases are among recent immigrants, people who

have ingested food products imported from abroad, or in people who have traveled to countries where brucellosis is common. Occasionally there are cases reported in veterinarians, butchers, meat inspectors, and farmers. Hunters may be infected through skin wounds or by accidentally ingesting bacteria after cleaning deer, elk, moose, or wild pigs that they have killed.

What is the treatment for brucellosis?

Brucellosis infection is treated with a combination of antibiotics that lasts for a minimum of six weeks to prevent reoccurring infection. Depending on the severity of the illness, recovery may take a few weeks to several months.

Are there complications from brucellosis?

The risk of death from brucellosis is low, less than 2%, and is usually associated with endocarditis, an infection of the heart valves and parts of the inside lining of the heart muscle.

How can brucellosis be prevented?

Do not consume:

- Unpasteurized milk, cheese, or ice cream. Pasteurization is a heating process that destroys harmful bacteria in raw milk.
- Raw or uncooked animal products

Hunters should use rubber gloves, goggles, and gowns or aprons when handling organs in the cavity of the animal.

There is no vaccine available for humans.

How do I get more information on brucellosis?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/brucellosis/>

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