

ANTHRAX

What is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a zoonotic disease caused by the spore-forming bacteria *Bacillus anthracis*. Many people associate the term “anthrax” with a bioterrorism agent. However, *anthrax is naturally present in soil across the United States and the world*. Ideal weather conditions and specific soil types create a favorable environment for the bacteria. *In these areas, anthrax outbreaks are not uncommon.*

What animals are susceptible to anthrax?

Livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, bison, horses) and wild herbivores (elk, pronghorn, deer, and occasionally moose) are the main animals affected by anthrax. They are exposed orally or through inhalation while grazing on pastures or landscapes where anthrax spores are present in the soil. Carnivores, including dogs and cats, are rarely infected with anthrax.

What are the signs of anthrax in animals?

The most common sign of anthrax in livestock and wildlife is sudden death. Prior to death, infected animals may have a fever, stagger, tremble, and have difficulty breathing. Animals often die within 24-72 hours. Blood may ooze from the nose, mouth, and rectum after death.

How is anthrax diagnosed?

A diagnosis is made by testing the blood of infected animals and identifying DNA of the anthrax bacteria in the blood (PCR assay). This sample should be collected by a veterinarian with appropriate personal protective equipment.

Can anthrax infected animals spread the disease to humans?

Yes. Handling sick or dead animals, or ingesting undercooked meat from an animal that has been infected with anthrax can spread the disease to humans. Spread of anthrax from person-to-person is unlikely.

What should be done with the carcasses of animals that die of anthrax?

If not managed properly, animals that die of anthrax contaminate the soil with anthrax spores. Infected carcasses should be burned completely and buried.

Is an anthrax vaccine available for livestock?

Yes. A vaccine for livestock is routinely used in areas where anthrax naturally occurs. It is only available through a veterinarian.

What steps can I take to protect my animals and myself from anthrax?

- Avoid contact with dead animals. Call your veterinarian immediately if you have unexplained livestock deaths.
- Wear a mask, gloves, boots and coveralls when handling sick or dead animals.
- Vaccinate livestock as recommended in regions where anthrax naturally occurs.
- Dispose of livestock carcasses properly.



Who should I contact if I suspect anthrax?

Livestock:

Contact your veterinarian immediately.

Anthrax is a reportable disease.

Immediately report suspect or confirmed anthrax cases in livestock to the Wyoming Livestock Board
307.777.7515

Humans:

Contact your physician immediately and Wyoming Public Health
307.777.7656

Wildlife:

Contact Wyoming Game and Fish
307.777.4600

