

## Livestock Anthrax Awareness

### **Anthrax**

Anthrax is caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, a large rod shaped bacteria.

Anthrax is an acute, infectious disease that affects all warm-blooded animals including humans. Anthrax is contagious, however, it is not considered highly contagious. It occurs throughout the world in so-called anthrax districts. The bacillus that causes anthrax can survive for years in the spore stage resisting all destructive agents.

### **Anthrax Symptoms**

Among livestock species cattle and sheep are the most susceptible species to anthrax infection. The disease most frequently affects mature livestock when grazing on summer pasture. Anthrax has a history of sudden animal death. Sick animals are feverish, excitable, and later depressed. They carry their head low, and lag behind the herd. Their respiration is rapid, appearing to pant. There are swellings over the entire body especially around the neck region. On lactating animals milk is generally bloody or ceases to flow entirely. A bloody discharge is common from all body openings.

### **Anthrax Treatment**

If you suspect anthrax infection in an animal contact a veterinarian immediately. Animals are treatable with massive doses of antibiotics only in the early stages of the disease.

### **Anthrax Control and Eradication**

All control measures should be carried out under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. A farmer should never open the carcass of a dead animal suspected of having died from anthrax. Quarantine will be implemented until all immediate danger of anthrax transmission is past. It is recommended that all carcasses and contaminated materials be burned completely or deeply buried and covered with quicklime preferably on the premises. Vaccinate all exposed but healthy animals, rotate pastures, and initiate a ridged sanitation program. Spray infected and normal animals with insecticides for fly control to avoid fly transmission of anthrax infection.

## **Anthrax Prevention**

In an infected area vaccinations should be repeated each year, usually in the spring; and there should be adequate fly control measures implemented during the insect season. There are many types of biologics (serums, bacterins, and vaccines) used for the prevention of anthrax outbreaks. The choice of the appropriate vaccine should be left to the state veterinarian or overseeing state health agency.

Prevention of anthrax in man depends on (1) the ability to eradicate the disease outbreak in livestock and wildlife animals; (2) the elimination of ensuing industrial infections (tanneries, woolen mills, and factories utilizing animal hide and hair products); and (3) early diagnosis and prompt treatment of infected cases.

## **Livestock Producers Responsibility**

It is the civic duty of a livestock producer to report immediately any suspect cases of anthrax to state veterinarian agencies. In Maryland contact the Maryland Department of Agriculture, State Veterinarian, Dr Roger Olsen at 410 841-5810.

Source: Entsminger, M. E., [The Stockman's Handbook](#)

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