

**Q fever put my mate out of action for months. I can't afford to be laid up and take any time off work.**



You can protect yourself and your family from Q fever. Speak to your doctor or visit [health.nsw.gov.au/qfever](http://health.nsw.gov.au/qfever)

**Q FEVER.  
SERIOUS.  
PREVENTABLE.**



February 2019 © NSW Health. SHPN (HPNSW) 190392.

**Q fever could have you off work for months. Protect yourself and your family.**



## What is Q fever?

Q fever is an infectious disease spread to humans from infected livestock, pets and native animals.

You can get Q fever by breathing infected air particles from animal urine, milk, faeces, animal afterbirth, and bedding that animals have contaminated.

## Who is at risk of getting it?

Anyone who works with livestock is at risk, including farmers, farm employees, graziers, shearers, livestock transporters and abattoir workers. Other people at risk include those with direct contact with animals which may carry the bacteria, including veterinarians, dog/cat breeders, wildlife carers and people living on farms. People who live near livestock or occasionally visit farm environments could also be at risk.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms begin about 2 to 3 weeks after exposure and include:

- high fevers and chills
- severe sweats
- severe headaches, often behind the eyes
- muscle and joint pains
- extreme fatigue

Symptoms can last from 2 to 6 weeks and occasionally people develop chronic infections which affect the heart or liver. Some people can also develop chronic fatigue which can last for years.

## How do I protect myself?

Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent Q fever infection and is recommended for anyone working or living on a farm aged 15 years and older.

If you are not protected against Q fever (by vaccination or past infection) you should:

- avoid high risk activities such as birthing, butchering or slaughtering cattle, sheep or goats or handling newborns
- wear protective clothing (e.g. coverall, gloves and boots) and a P2 mask
- wear a P2 mask when mowing areas contaminated with animal faeces
- cover cuts and wounds with water proof bandages when handling animal products, waste, placentas and aborted fetuses
- wash your hands and arms thoroughly in soapy water after handling animals, animal products and potentially contaminated materials
- avoid laundering contaminated clothing or other items worn during high risk activities

## How can I protect people in my household?

Encourage people who live in your home to get vaccinated. To protect those who are not vaccinated, you should:

- wash your hands and arms thoroughly in soapy water before returning home from the farm.
- remove and wash contaminated clothing, coveralls and boots in outdoor wash areas.
- Avoid taking contaminated clothing, coveralls and boots home. If you do take them home, bag and wash them separately (they should only be handled by someone immune to Q fever infection).

