

Basic Fact Sheet – Brucellosis in Animals
Texas Department of Health, Zoonosis Control Division

What is brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a disease caused by several species of bacteria (*Brucella*). It can affect many different kinds of animals as well as humans.

How can an animal get brucellosis?

Animals can get brucellosis naturally from breeding with infected animals or from eating feed contaminated (made impure) with *Brucella*.

What are the signs of brucellosis?

Natural brucellosis infection often causes miscarriages in pregnant animals. Infected horses may develop draining sores at the base of the neck called fistulous withers. Breathing a large number of *Brucella* bacteria may cause other less noticeable signs that can take months to develop.

How is brucellosis diagnosed?

There is a blood test that a veterinarian can use to determine if an animal has been exposed to brucellosis.

How is brucellosis treated?

Livestock exposed to brucellosis are usually quarantined (not allowed to contact healthy animals) to prevent spreading the disease. Infected pets should be treated with antibiotics and spayed or neutered.

Is a brucellosis vaccine available?

There is a vaccine for use in livestock. To be effective, it must be given before the animal is exposed to the bacteria. No vaccine exists for pets.

Can infected animals spread brucellosis?

Yes. The Texas Animal Health Commission routinely quarantines infected livestock herds and arranges for herd testing and disposal. Infected pets should be treated with antibiotics and spayed or neutered to prevent spread of the disease to humans and other animals. People can be infected by directly contacting, eating, or inhaling (breathing in) *Brucella*. Person-to-person spread of the disease is unlikely.

What should be done with animals that die of brucellosis?

There are no special burial or disposal requirements.

How can I protect my animals and myself?

Vaccinate livestock. Disinfect areas in contact with *Brucella* (for instance, through placental fluids or tissues) with a mixture of one part household bleach (0.5% hypochlorite) in nine parts water. Apply this mixture to all surfaces and wash off with water after waiting at least 30 minutes.