



ANTHRAX

FACT SHEET

WHAT IS ANTHRAX?

Anthrax is a naturally occurring, reportable disease affecting deer, livestock, exotic livestock, horses, swine, and other herbivores. Anthrax can affect humans.

Anthrax is caused by *Bacillus anthracis*; a spore-forming bacteria. The bacteria can remain alive, but dormant in the soil for several years.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Upon becoming infected, animals typically show symptoms within three to seven days. Once symptoms begin, death will usually occur within 48 hours. Infection is usually less severe in swine, horses, dogs and humans. Although they may become ill, they can fully recover.

Signs and symptoms of anthrax include:

- Acute fever
- Staggering
- Difficulty breathing
- Seizures
- Sudden death
- Bloated carcasses with lack of rigor mortis and bloody discharge from orifices

TRANSMISSION

The bacteria can surface, contaminating soil and grass after periods of wet, cool weather, followed by hot, dry conditions. During these conditions, animals ingest the anthrax bacteria when they consume contaminated grass and hay, or by inhaling the spores. The spores are odorless, colorless and tasteless.

Wildlife may transmit the disease through contact with other infected animals. Research is underway to further understand how anthrax and wild animals, such as feral swine, play a part in transmission.

Flies may also act as a mechanical vector in spreading anthrax.

DIAGNOSIS

Producers who suspect carcasses or animals to be infected with anthrax, should notify a veterinarian immediately.

Upon laboratory confirmation of the disease, the TAHC will work closely with the affected landowner to prevent disease spread by quarantining the premises to restrict animal movement. Anthrax quarantines are typically lifted after proper disposal of carcasses and/or vaccination of livestock on the premises has been completed.

Carcasses infected with anthrax must be properly disposed of in accordance with TAHC rules and regulations. Owners and/or caretakers must burn carcasses until they are thoroughly consumed to prevent further contamination of the soil.

Heavy oils and tires should not be used as fire fuel due to environmental concerns. Fuels approved by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) include gasoline, diesel or wood.

In counties with a burn ban, burning MUST be coordinated with local fire authorities prior to carcass disposal.

All equipment, housing and transportation tools should be disinfected using an amonio-based disinfectant, peroxide, or chlorine dioxide labeled as effective for anthrax. All label directions should be carefully followed.

REPORTING ANTHRAX

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) should be notified of all suspected and confirmed cases of anthrax. Reports can be made to any TAHC region office or to the TAHC headquarters at 1-800-550-8242.



PREVENTION

An effective vaccine for livestock is available and is commonly used in areas that have anthrax. To be effective, it must be used before the animal is exposed to the bacteria.

Consult a local veterinarian or a local TAHC region office for more details on vaccinating your livestock for anthrax. All label directions should be followed carefully, including personal protective measures while handling the vaccine to prevent accidental exposure.

HUMAN HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

When dealing with vaccines and/or carcasses practice good biosecurity:

- Wear long sleeves and gloves
- Do not move or open bloated carcasses as that could cause spore formation of the bacteria and return anthrax into the environment
- Do not salvage hides, horns, antlers, skulls or any other tissue from the carcasses
- Wash hands thoroughly after activity

Consult your physician for treatment if you suffer a needle stick, splash vaccine in cuts or scratches, or if you develop a sore or lesions after handling vaccine, livestock or carcasses. Humans may contract anthrax and develop a skin condition, treatable with specific antibiotics.

For more information on how anthrax affects humans, visit: <https://bit.ly/36Z5TVG>.

Dogs should be kept out of pastures and away from carcasses during an anthrax outbreak. They may develop an infection from the bacteria and may require treatment.

Hunters should:

- Wear latex gloves when processing game to prevent potential exposure to bacteria, viruses or parasites.
- Thoroughly cook all harvested meat.

ANTHRAX OUTBREAKS

Anthrax is found worldwide, but in Texas, cases are most often confined to a triangular area bound by the towns of Uvalde, Ozona and Eagle Pass. This area includes portions of Crockett, Val Verde, Sutton, Edwards, Kinney And Maverick Counties.

