

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## BRUCELLOSIS

Brucellosis is caused by a group of bacteria which typically infect cattle, bison, pigs, sheep, goats, dogs, and humans. Wild rabbits and rodents have been known to transmit the disease to livestock.

### Symptoms

Symptoms generally appear within 5 to 60 days, but may take up to a year.

- The most common symptom is fever, often accompanied by chills, sweating and weakness.
- Insomnia, sexual impotence, headache, lack of appetite, depression and joint pain may also occur.
- Symptoms may continue for a long time if left untreated.
- Brucellosis can result in serious infections of the brain or lining of the heart.

### Transmission

- Brucellosis is rare in the United States, but is more common in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean.
- The most common way to be infected is by eating or drinking contaminated milk products, including unpasteurized milk, ice cream, or cheese. Eating undercooked meat could also cause infection.
- Laboratory workers, hunters, or meat industry workers can breathe in or touch the bacteria from lab cultures or animal carcasses.
- People who work with live animals can be infected through accidental needlesticks with animal vaccine, or by helping animals birth babies.
- Direct person-to-person spread of brucellosis is extremely rare. Mothers who are breastfeeding may transmit the infection to their infants. Sexual transmission could also occur.

### Treatment

- A doctor may send a blood or bone marrow sample to a lab to test for Brucellosis.
- Brucellosis is treated with an extended course of antibiotics. The infection can relapse in some cases.

### Prevention

- Eat or drink only pasteurized (boiled or heated) dairy products. Most store-bought milk is pasteurized, but fresh farm products may not be. International travelers should take care not to eat or drink dairy products unless they know they are pasteurized.
- People who work with animals should take care to cover open wounds and wear gloves when handling animal carcasses or touching bodily fluids from an animal.
- People with decreased immune systems (such as people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or organ transplants) should stay away from dogs that have been diagnosed with brucellosis.

### Additional Information

- Consult the Ohio Administrative code for requirements on vaccinating and testing livestock in Ohio. Link: <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/901%3A1-5>.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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