

Anthrax

Anthrax exists in certain regions of Australia and outbreaks occur sporadically.

Anthrax is a disease caused by infection with the bacteria *Bacillus anthracis* which is highly infectious to humans. Horses are rarely infected, with sheep, cattle and pigs being the most susceptible. The *anthracis* bacteria:

- Are highly resistant, infectious spores that are capable of surviving outside of the host
- Release toxins in the blood of the host while the bacteria are undergoing rapid reproduction

Transmission occurs in one of three ways:

- cuts in the skin (cutaneous)
- inhalation
- ingestion

Within hours or days after exposure, infected animals may show signs of:

- Fever
- Debilitation
- Breathing difficulties
- Disorientation

A sick animal may have a fever of 106 degrees or higher, appear depressed and is usually off to itself. Sometimes **large swellings** appear on the shoulder, brisket or side. A "blackberry jam" stool may be passed. Death comes within hours to two days after signs of illness develop.

A frothy discharge may be observed from the nose in addition to bloody discharges from other body orifices.

Signs of ingestion anthrax include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea.

Signs of inhalation anthrax include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Depressiveion
- Breathing difficulties

This is the most serious type of anthrax infection.

Signs of cutaneous (skin) anthrax include a small painless bump that often appears on the skin which becomes a blister and then an ulcer with a black centre. In humans, this is the most common type of anthrax infection and can be treated with antibiotics.

Anthrax is a potentially fatal disease and all appropriate precautions should be taken to avoid exposure. The carcass of a dead animal suspected of having anthrax **SHOULD NOT BE OPENED OR TOUCHED!**



Large swelling on chest in horse with Anthrax