

Toolbox Talks



We all need to remember

- If you are unsure of anything or feel that something you have been asked to do is dangerous, DO NOT begin the task. ASK for assistance or more information and we will work together to find a safe way to do the job or solve the problem.
- Ensure you are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid Kit.
- Make sure everyone is fit for work, free from signs of fatigue, drugs or alcohol. If in doubt, ask or talk to your manager.
- This farm is a workplace, but may also be a place of residence for the owner, their managers and employees. Be vigilant for children and bystanders at all times. Refer to *Child Safety on Farms*.
- The safety, health and wellbeing of all who live on, work on and visit this farm is the most important responsibility we all share.

Even if we are busy and under time or financial pressures, safety **MUST** come first.



emergencyplus
Save the App that could save your life.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS
In case of emergency, **CALL 000** or your local emergency service provider, then call your manager or supervisor.
POISONS 13 11 26
Poisons Information Centre

A Practical Guide Q Fever

Australia has some of the highest rates of Q Fever infection in the world. Q Fever can have mild to severe short-term effects on a person's health but it can also have serious long-term health implications. Chronic Q Fever can affect a person's health and ability to work for many years and result in long-lasting health issues, such as hepatitis, pneumonia, weakened immune system, heart problems, and chronic fatigue-like illnesses. One of the challenging aspects of Q Fever is that infected animals often do not show any signs of being sick. This means you can't tell just by looking at an animal if it carries the bacteria that causes Q Fever.

What is Q Fever?

Q Fever is a bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Coxiella burnetii*. It can affect both animals and humans, and it is prevalent in livestock, particularly cattle, sheep, and goats. In the farm environment, Q Fever presents a significant risk, and it's important to be informed and take preventive measures.

While cattle, sheep and goats are the main sources of infection, a wide range of animals can spread the bacteria to humans – including domestic dogs and cats as well as feral pigs, dogs and cats, horses, camels, rabbits, rodents, llamas, alpacas, foxes, and Australian native wildlife, including wallabies, bandicoots and kangaroos.

The bacteria can be found in urine, faeces, blood, birth fluids including placenta and the milk of animals who carry the bacteria or may be infected. These bacteria can survive in the soil and dust for many years and can be spread by the wind across large areas, potentially infecting people who have not been in contact with animals.

How Does Q Fever Spread?

People usually become infected by breathing in the Q Fever bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*. The bacteria comes from an infected animal and Q Fever is primarily found in the placenta, birth fluids, and milk. Once the bacteria are released into the environment through these materials, they can become airborne.

Human Q Fever infection typically occurs through:

- Breathing in the bacteria that is in the air or dust.
- While birthing, slaughtering, or butchering infected animals (especially cattle, sheep or goats). These activities carry a very high risk of infection.



- When handling infected animals, infected animal tissues, fluids or excretions, or animal products or materials that have been infected including wool, hides, straw, manure fertilizer, and contaminated clothing (e.g. washing clothes worn when birthing, butchering or slaughtering animals).
- While herding, shearing, or transporting animals.
- While mowing grass, or disturbing soil that is contaminated by infected animal excretions.
- Direct contact with infected animal tissue or fluids on broken skin (e.g. cuts or needlestick injuries when working with infected animals).
- Drinking unpasteurised milk from infected cows, sheep, and goats.

A Practical Guide Q Fever

Symptoms of Q Fever in Humans

Q Fever symptoms can range from mild to severe and may include:

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills and sweats
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chest pain.

Untreated, symptoms can last up to 6 weeks. However, some people develop debilitating chronic and long-lasting health issues, such as hepatitis and pneumonia, weakened immune system, heart problems, and chronic fatigue-like illnesses.

Symptoms of Q Fever in Animals

Animals infected with Q Fever often show no visible signs of illness. In rare cases, Q Fever in animals can lead to issues like abortions, especially in goats, stillbirths, infertility, or pneumonia. Animals cannot be vaccinated for Q Fever. It is best to always assume that Q Fever bacteria may be present and to take precautions.

Links and Resources

SafeWork Australia –
Occupational Lung Disease
safeworkaustralia.gov.au

NSW Health –
Q Fever Fact Sheet
health.nsw.gov.au

Worksafe Queensland – Q Fever
worksafe.qld.gov.au



Reducing the Risk

Reducing the risk of Q Fever infection is essential for farm safety. Here are some key preventive measures:

Vaccination

Consult with your healthcare provider about Q Fever vaccination. This vaccine is essential for individuals regularly exposed to livestock.

Hygiene

Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals or their birthing products.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Use appropriate PPE, such as masks, gloves, and protective clothing, when working with animals and their birthing products.

Separation

Separate pregnant animals and their off-spring from the main herd or flock to reduce the risk of infection.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Maintain clean and hygienic conditions in animal birthing areas, and regularly disinfect surfaces that may come into contact with the bacteria.

Reducing Exposure to Dust

Watering down yards, and ensuring air filters are kept clean and in good working order in vehicles and other close-cabin machinery.

What to Do If You Suspect Q Fever

If you or a colleague develop symptoms that resemble Q Fever, take these steps:

1. Seek Medical Attention

Contact a healthcare provider immediately. Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial for managing Q Fever.

2. Inform Healthcare Provider

Inform your healthcare provider about your occupation and potential exposure to livestock.



Toolbox Talks

Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

The information sheet is background information ONLY. Be sure to customise your talk to your operation and facilities.

How to deliver an effective Toolbox Talk

- Know your Topic. If you don't understand the material it will be hard to explain and make it relevant.
- Print copies of the Toolbox Talk Info sheet for yourself and each of the participants.
- Hold the talk in a location relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Explain why the Toolbox Talk is being held.
- Stay on topic and keep it simple.
- Encourage conversation and participation.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible.
- Be open to questions.
- Read through the provided cases studies.
- After each study ask attendees what could have been done to prevent this situation.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Record the details of the Toolbox Talk including the location, date and names of attendees.

Note: This Facilitator Guide is intended to provide a basic structure for conducting a Toolbox Talk. Customise it as needed to suit your specific audience and objectives. Always prioritise safety and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the information presented.

A Practical Guide

Q Fever

Introduction

- Welcome everyone.
- Explain what Q Fever is and why it is a hazard for common tasks on farms.
- Emphasise the importance of being aware of Q Fever.

Icebreaker Consider starting with a brief question or scenario related to Q Fever Safety to engage participants. For example, "Do you know someone who has had Q Fever? How did it affect them?"

Distribution of Resources Handout printed Toolbox Talk Information Sheets and any other resources.

Key Points

Animals with Q Fever may not show any symptoms

- Always assume that Q Fever could be present.
- Report observed increase in stock abortions promptly.

How Q Fever is spread

- Discuss the ways Q Fever bacteria can spread, such as through animal birth fluids, urine, faeces, and dust.
- Highlight the risk of inhaling contaminated air.

Preventative Measures

- **Vaccination:** Emphasise the importance of Q Fever vaccinations. Encourage everyone to check their vaccination status.
- **Hygiene:** Stress the significance of proper handwashing with soap and water after handling animals or being in their vicinity. If soap isn't available, hand sanitisers are a good alternative.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Explain the use of gloves, masks, and goggles as essential protective gear, especially when handling animals or cleaning their areas.
- **Reducing dust exposure:** Explain how dust exposure can be reduced and what is being done on your farm to reduce dust exposure, such as dampening down yards with sprinklers prior to use.



Interactive Discussion and Case Studies

Encourage participants to share their experiences, challenges, or questions related to Q Fever tasks.

Use the Case Studies on the next page to prompt conversation. Read the case studies out loud and ask participants for their thoughts.

Q&A Session

Allow participants to ask questions and seek clarification on any topics covered.

Conclusion

Summarise the main takeaways from the talk.

Reiterate the importance of everyone's commitment to safety on the farm.

Closing Remarks

Thank participants for their time and attention.

Remind them to apply the knowledge gained from this Toolbox Talk in their daily work.

Feedback

Ask for feedback on the Toolbox Talk content and delivery to improve future sessions.

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CASE STUDIES



Risk Management Tools

DOWNLOAD ONLINE MATRIX

Use this simple and effective tool to assess and manage the risk of your farming activities prior to commencing.

All team members can join in and contribute, developing different ways to manage risks on your farm. Doing a risk assessment helps determine hazards and develop appropriate control measures to lessen risks.

farmsafe.org.au

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Disclaimer: This *Toolbox Talk* is intended as a *general* guide only and is designed to be used to increase risk awareness and safe work practices - it is not legal advice and does not take the place of proper individualised on-farm workplace inductions, work, health and safety training, or any other tailored steps which may be necessary to protect health and safety at specific worksites.

CASE STUDY 1 Risky Business of Q Fever

Scenario

Sunny Vale Farms has just found out that they have had an outbreak of Q Fever amongst their stock.

QUESTION	ANSWER
<p>Sunny Vale Farms management team decide to hold a Toolbox Talk for anyone who is at risk of Q Fever. This Toolbox Talk is intended to raise awareness of symptoms and discuss prevention. Who should be included in this Toolbox Talk?</p> <p>A. The gardener. B. The grader driver. C. The nanny who helps feed the animals occasionally. D. The stock workers. E. The cook.</p>	<p>Everyone should be included in the Toolbox Talk. Q Fever can be spread through the dust or in the air. While workers who are coming into direct contact with stock may have increased exposure levels, everyone on the farm could be at risk, even the cook. It is important to include anyone who prepares food on the farm as well. If animal products from the farm are being consumed on the farm, they need to be correctly cooked and treated to prevent potential exposure to Q Fever.</p>
<p>What can be done to reduce the risk of exposure to the gardener?</p>	<p>Vaccination is the most reliable way to prevent Q Fever infection. Other things that can be done include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that areas to be mowed are exclusion-fenced so that animals cannot access these areas. For example, mesh fencing can be used around garden areas to exclude rabbits and wallabies from gaining access. • Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) may be used as an interim or short-term control measure to protect non-immune workers, contractors and visitors in Q Fever risk areas. • Use sprinklers to dampen the ground prior to mowing. <p>Use this case study to discuss the importance of being aware of other people in the vicinity of work that creates dust.</p>
<p>What can be done to reduce the risk of exposure to the grader driver?</p>	<p>Vaccination is the most reliable way to prevent Q Fever infection. Other things that can be done include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclosing the cabins of earthmoving equipment and fitting high-efficiency air filtering systems (e.g. HEPA filters) to the intake and cabin recirculation air intake. • Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) may be used as an interim or short-term control measure to protect non-immune workers, contractors and visitors in Q Fever risk areas. • Dust suppression may be an option and should be considered where the dust from earthworks may impact people other than the grader driver. Water can be used to suppress dust and prevent it from becoming airborne (e.g. use water tankers, static sprinklers, and other watering methods). <p>Use this case study to discuss the importance of being aware of other people in the vicinity of work that creates dust.</p>

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Facilitator Guide

INSTRUCTIONS

This sign-off template is available for you to use as part of your training packages. You will need to attach all evidence of all information given to the person that you have spoken with regarding this specific Toolbox Talk. This may include checklists, policies, safe operating procedures or notes about the conversations had, questions asked and other information provided.

Holding Toolbox Talks or safety meetings are not just about checking a box – they need to be tailored to your farming environment, meet the legislative requirements, and designed to support your employee, contractor, family member or visitor throughout the time that they spend living or working on your property. Inductions are only the first step in your WHS journey and it is important that you continue to create a safety culture on your farm by continuing to engage with your employees on any matters that may affect their health, safety and wellbeing.

The employee/contractor/visitor/family member that you have had this conversation with should acknowledge that they have received, discussed and understood all the relevant information that has been presented to them and attached and sign in the relevant space provided. A good practice is to ensure that the employee initials or signs each relevant piece of information that is attached and retains a copy of each for their own information. Records of WHS conversations should be kept alongside records of employment or in your work, health and safety management system and be updated as needed or as required by law.

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Q Fever

On-farm Toolbox Talk

Sign-off Sheet

Please list and/or attach all documents that have been provided including checklists, policies, safe operating procedures, etc.

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On-farm Toolbox Talk Participants

EMPLOYER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have provided a relevant safety meeting to our farming business and that the employee has received, discussed and understood the listed and attached information.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

1. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature



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On-farm Toolbox Talk Sign-off Sheet

CONTINUED



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

This project is supported by the Department of
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through
funding from the Australian Government's National
Farm Safety Education Fund.

2. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

3. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

4. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature

5. EMPLOYEE / CONTRACTOR / VISITOR / FAMILY MEMBER – DETAILS

I confirm that I have received, discussed and understood all information that has been listed and attached to this document.

Given Name(s)

Surname

Property Name

Date

Signature