

Zoonoses Diseases

Most people will have no idea what a Zoonoses Disease is and will probably have never even heard of them. It is something we should be aware of as there seems to be more and more cases of small out breaks being published in the press. The bottom line is that people can die or be seriously ill from the effects of a zoonoses disease. Here are a few simple pointers for you to consider and to follow .

Zoonoses are diseases that are passed from animals to humans.

Micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungi, parasites and viruses can cause illness by infecting the body when they are breathed in, swallowed, or when they penetrate the skin through small cuts or grazes.

Make sure your COSHH assessment takes zoonoses into account and Minimise the risk of infection by keeping stock healthy.

Vaccinate where appropriate, eg against enzootic abortion of ewes, avoid contaminating animal drinking water and take time to check your stock health regularly;

Avoid or, if this is not possible, reduce contact with animals;

Wear suitable protective clothing such as overalls when handling animals, especially if they are sick, and gloves and a waterproof apron if handling potentially infected material such as products of birth or muck or sewage;

Ensure good personal hygiene. Wash and dry your hands before eating, drinking or smoking;

Immediately wash and dry all cuts and grazes and cover with a waterproof dressing;

Control rats and other vermin that can spread disease.

Consult your vet or animal health specialist on likely zoonoses from your animals, but the common ones include:

- Orf from sheep or goats, which produces painful pustules on hands, arms and face;
- Leptospirosis from rats (Weil's disease) and cattle urine, which causes a feverish illness with headache and can result in meningitis. Early treatment is vital;
- Ringworm, which is a fungal disease from many types of livestock;
- Enzootic abortion (*chlamydia psittaci*) from sheep. Pregnant women should not associate or work with ewes during lambing, nor be exposed to soiled clothing contaminated with afterbirths etc as severe illness and miscarriage may result;
- cryptosporidiosis, from a parasite picked up by touching livestock, animal housing, or feed, which can cause diarrhoea in humans, and be particularly severe in young children;
- Lyme disease, from the bite of an infected tick in woodland or grassland. Starts with a rash around the site of the bite and intermittent flu-like symptoms. More serious symptoms affecting the nervous system may develop later. Early diagnosis is essential;
- Q fever from cattle and sheep can also be carried by other mammals, including deer. Leads to acute illness with feverish symptoms but occasionally pneumonia and other complications. There is also a more serious chronic form of Q fever;
- Ornithosis (another form of *chlamydia psittaci*) from birds, which can cause flu-like symptoms in humans, followed by pneumonia.

- *E. coli* is a common type of bacteria that can get into food, normally lives inside your intestines, where it helps your body break down and digest the food you eat. Unfortunately, certain types (called strains) of *E. coli* can get from the intestines into the blood. This is a rare illness, but it can cause a very serious infection.
- Salmonella infection is a foodborne illness caused by the salmonella bacteria carried by some animals, which can be transmitted from kitchen surfaces and can be in water, soil, animal feces, raw meats, and eggs. Salmonella infections typically affect the intestines, causing vomiting, fever, and other symptoms that usually resolve without medical treatment.