

Q Fever Vaccination Policy for Public Health Services

October 2002



Queensland Government
Queensland Health

1. PURPOSE

To ensure that Queensland Health Public Health Services staff are not exposed to the risk of Q fever and to identify target groups for pre-screening/vaccination.

2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to all Public Health Services staff, who may, during the course of their work, be required to visit an abattoir or other agricultural sites where animal reservoirs for Q fever may be found. Cattle, sheep, goats and some native animals (including kangaroos and bandicoots) are the more common reservoirs.

3. DESCRIPTION OF AT-RISK ACTIVITIES

The physical visit to or entering of the above facilities/sites by Public Health Services staff may provide a potential risk of exposure to Q fever. The greatest potential for exposure to Q fever is visiting higher risk environments, which include areas of a kill floor of an abattoir or animal birthing areas where precautions (eg. screens, ventilation) have not been taken to protect people in the viewing area. Unless immune, there is a significant risk of acquiring Q fever following an exposure to Q fever organisms.

4. NATURE OF VISITS TO SITES THAT REPRESENT A RISK OF EXPOSURE

The nature of visits to the above facilities by Public Health Services staff may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Investigation or joint investigations with the Division of Workplace Health and Safety regarding cases/outbreaks of notifiable diseases eg leptospirosis, Q fever
- The possibility of investigation of food borne illness outbreaks implicating a site canteen or other food supply source
- Regulatory activities regarding drugs and poisons on site
- Joint audits of abattoirs with the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) and Safe Food Queensland
- Providing advice regarding issues such as waste handling/management and mosquito breeding
- Investigation of complaints concerning environmental health issues.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Identifying a core group of Q fever immune staff in Public Health Services.

Each Public Health Unit should ensure that it has at least one or preferably two staff members who are Q fever immune¹. Environmental health officers, public health medical officers, public health nurses and Indigenous environmental health workers should be considered as suitable officers under this policy.

Public Health Services staff in corporate office are unlikely to be visiting a higher risk environment. However, should the occasion arise, the Q fever immune status of the officer should be considered.

Only persons who are immune to Q fever should be sent to higher risk environments viz. abattoirs and animal birthing areas where precautions (eg. screens, ventilation) have not been taken to protect people in the viewing area.

Visits to lower risk environments (agricultural sites where animal reservoirs of Q fever may be found eg. farms, cattle yards) for short periods of time do not require the person to be Q fever immune. However, depending upon prevailing circumstances, officers may consider the use of personal protective equipment.

5.2 Arranging vaccination

Public Health Medical Officers can arrange for the relevant staff to be screened and vaccinated against Q fever. These staff should take a letter (see Appendix 1) to a Q fever registered vaccine provider (updated list available from the Q fever register website at www.qfever.org). Public Health Unit Networks are responsible for the cost of prescreening and/or vaccination of their staff.

The process consists of:

- **first visit** to doctor: medical history, blood test (serology); skin test administered
- **second visit** to doctor: (one week later) skin test is “read”; serology result is checked; vaccine will be administered if not already immune.

Note: Full immunity is not achieved until 15 days post vaccination. During this period, staff should not visit higher risk environments.

The officer should obtain a “Q fever zoonosis card” from the doctor during the second visit. A template for this card is attached (see appendix 3). The card should be laminated and retained by the officer, as the card may need to be shown for entry into some abattoirs.

¹ Q fever immune means a person who has been vaccinated against Q fever or who has evidence of immunity to Q fever ie a positive skin test and/or positive antibody test.

Alternatively, the blood sample could be collected from the PHS officer in-house, and after being appropriately labelled, sent to Queensland Health Pathology Services for testing. If positive, the PHS officer is Q fever immune and a "Q fever zoonosis card" completed. If negative, the printed result should be taken to a Q fever registered vaccine provider for a skin test and vaccination if necessary.

5.3 Record Keeping

A copy of the Q fever zoonosis card should be kept on the personal file of the relevant officer. Staff should provide a photocopy (front and back) of their Q fever zoonosis card/record to the Public Health Unit Network Manager. The Public Health Unit Network Manager, using the form in Appendix 2 will keep a list of immunised staff. (It may be useful for each Public Health Unit to keep a list of immunised staff also).

5. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed as new information regarding risks associated with Q fever becomes known or every 12 months from when this policy comes into effect.

**Dr John Scott
State Manager
Public Health Services
2002**

Appendix 1

Enquiries to: Insert Name and Branch/Unit
Title
Telephone: Insert Tel No.
Facsimile: Insert Fax No.
Our Ref: Insert Ref. No.

Insert Addressee's Name
Insert Addressee's Title
Insert Company or Departmental Title
Insert, Address
Insert City, State, Postcode

Dear Doctor

Re:

The above is an *(insert position)* of the *(Insert name)* Public Health Unit and needs Q fever screening serology, skin test and vaccination, depending on results.

Could you please send your account to:


(Insert Name)
Manager *(Southern/Central/Tropical)* Public Health Unit Network
(Insert postal details)

Yours sincerely

Insert Name
Public Health Medical Officer
/ /2002

Appendix 3

Q fever ZONOSIS CARD



Name Date of Birth

Please turn over

**Q FEVER PRESCREENING –
VACCINATION**

Queensland Health

Serology date Pos/Neg result

Skin Test date Pos/Neg result

Q fever vaccination date:

Signed Dr.....Date