MEDIA RELEASE

15 October 2015

Doctor urges residents to consider Q Fever vaccination

DARLING Downs Public Health Unit Director Dr Penny Hutchinson is urging a wider range of residents to consider being vaccinated against the potential serious disease, Q Fever.

The illness was once considered the curse of those working in the beef and cattle industry.

However, Dr Hutchinson said more cases were becoming prevalent in people not directly linked to agriculture.

“We are starting to see more people contracting the disease who may not typically fit the ‘farm worker category’,” she said.

“We’ve seen not only farmers contracting Q Fever, but their families, as well as veterinarians, vet nurses and dog and cat breeders.”

Q Fever is a disease that is spread to humans from cattle, sheep, goats, domesticated animals and native animals.

People usually contract the disease via inhalation of the bacteria in the environment, but it can also be caught through ingestion of unpasteurised milk or exposure to animal urine, faeces or birth products.

Symptoms include high fever, headaches, aches and pains. Complications of the disease have led to hospitalisations, renal failure and death. The symptoms usually last from two to six weeks, however, some people develop Post Q Fever Fatigue Syndrome which lasts for a number of years.

Dr Hutchinson said the DDPHU had received notifications of approximately 200 cases of Q Fever across the Darling Downs and South West over the past two years.

Australia is the only country in the world to provide a vaccination against the disease.

The vaccine can only be administered by a doctor who has undergone a registration and training process.

“Q Fever vaccination is a two-step process,” Dr Hutchinson said.

“Firstly blood and skin tests are conducted to ensure the patient hasn’t already been exposed.

“If this test is negative, then the vaccine can be administered.”

Details of registered vaccine providers can be found online: http://www.qfever.org/querylist.php
Caption: DDPHU clinical nurse Josie Crowe with DDPHU environment health officer Alisha Scarlett promote the uptake of the Q Fever vaccine at a recent beef expo in Toowoomba.

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