



# Q fever/Query fever Backgrounder

First described in Australia in 1935, Q fever is a disease normally found in sheep, cattle, goats, and ticks. The cause of the disease is *Coxiella burnetii*, a bacteria-like agent known as a rickettsia. Humans acquire Q fever by inhaling the rickettsia which become airborne during handling and processing of animals.

Domestic animals such as sheep, cattle, and goats usually serve as the reservoir of infection for humans. These domestic animals shed the organism in their urine, feces, milk, and especially in their birth products. Humans most frequently contract Q fever in areas where contaminated animal products are handled (e.g., slaughter houses, rendering plants, and dairies).