

Brucellosis

Agent: *Brucella* species (bacteria)

Mode of Transmission: Most commonly through ingestion of unpasteurized milk or milk products from infected animals, but also may be transmitted by contamination of skin wounds with infected animal tissue or body fluids and by inhalation of the organism.

Signs/Symptoms: Intermittent or irregular fever, headache, chills, sweating, and muscle pain.

Prevention: Unpasteurized dairy products, especially milk, cheese, or ice cream, should not be consumed. Barrier precautions, such as wearing rubber gloves, should be used when handling animal tissue. Laboratory workers should take proper infection control precautions when handling samples known to contain or suspected of containing *Brucella*.

Other Important Information: Considered an occupational disease of those working with infected animals, especially farm workers, veterinarians, and abattoir workers. Hunters of certain game animals such as elk, moose and feral swine may also be at increased risk of exposure. *Brucella* is listed by the CDC as a potential bioterrorism agent because the organism may be relatively easily disseminated, may cause moderate injury or death, and may need enhanced surveillance for detection.

In 2014, one case of brucellosis was reported in Virginia. The case occurred in an adult male from the northwest region. A definitive exposure could not be determined for this case. The five-year average number of cases of brucellosis in Virginia is 1.6 cases per year.