

Brucellosis

Agent: *Brucella* species (bacteria)

Mode of Transmission: Through ingestion of unpasteurized milk or milk products most commonly, 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. *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.

Three cases of brucellosis were reported in Virginia in 2013. Prior to this, the most recently reported cases in Virginia were the five cases diagnosed in 2009. The five-year average for brucellosis is 1.0 case per year. Of the cases reported in Virginia in 2013, one was from the southwest region and two cases were from the northern region. Of the two cases reported in the northern region, one reported consuming raw dairy products while in a Middle Eastern country and one was exposed to a *Brucella* culture while working in a laboratory. A definitive exposure could not be determined for the case reported from the southwest region.