

Disease prevention – human health and animal carcass disposal

The disposal of large numbers of animal carcasses following a natural disaster, such as a flood, could have effects on human health. The method of carcass disposal and the surrounding environment will influence the risks to human health and strategies should be implemented to mitigate any identified risks. Infection with a bacterial disease through broken skin (e.g. leptospirosis, melioidosis) or inhalation during procedures that generate dust or aerosols (e.g. Q fever) can be reduced through the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Personal protection

Carcasses should be handled as little as possible. Any cuts or broken skin should be cleaned and covered with a waterproof dressing prior to commencing disposal activities. Insect repellent should be applied if there are mosquitoes or black flies to prevent bites. Personal repellents containing DEET (diethyltoluamide) or picaridin tend to last longer than other repellents depending on the concentration.

Appropriate PPE should be worn when handling a carcass especially if large amounts of dust, fumes or body fluids are produced. Hand washing with soap and clean water should always be performed after contact with animals and after removing PPE.

PPE should include

- Gloves
- Leather or rubber boots
- Clothes that cover exposed skin – e.g. long sleeved shirts and trousers
- Eye protection

Take reasonable efforts to protect yourself from the inhalation of dust or other aerosols where Q fever infection may be a risk. Wearing a P2 mask (particulate respirator) should be considered and assessed on a case by case basis (e.g. when performing any procedures that create aerosols such as using a high-pressure cleaner to decontaminate equipment or if the environment is dry and windy) and will depend whether or not you are immune to or



vaccinated for Q fever. Further information on Q fever can be found in the Queensland Health Fact sheet <http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/33/116/q-fever>

If you feel unwell after handling an animal carcass contact your general practitioner or call the 13HEALTH information line (13 432584).

Additional information

- Controlling mosquito breeding after floods, storms and cyclones
https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/713419/dm-mosquito-breeding.pdf
- Black flies – a public health risk after a flood
https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/713407/dm-blackflies-postflood.pdf
- Returning to a disaster-affected house or building
https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/713425/dm-returning-home.pdf
- Workplace Health and Safety Queensland - Respiratory protective equipment
<https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/injury-prevention-safety/managing-risks/personal-protective-equipment-ppe/respiratory-protective-equipment-rpe>