



ANTHRAX FACT SHEET

Anthrax is a *bacterium* commonly found in the ground. Grazing animals contract Anthrax from close contact with soil where live bacteria are thriving. While Anthrax is usually thought of as a veterinary disease, it can be transmitted to humans from infected animals or from direct contact with sufficient quantities of the toxic spores of the bacterium. Criminals/terrorists have in the past used Anthrax as a specific biological weapon.

Exposure and infection from Anthrax handled/received thru the mail has occurred in a few cases. However by exercising due caution and following the listed preventative measures you can reduce the chances of both exposure/infection. It is important to be: (1) **ALERT** to recognized indicators of suspicious mailed items, and (2) **AWARE** what your immediate response actions are to any potential anthrax exposure/infection.

SUSPICIOUS MAIL INDICATORS

- Foreign Mail, Air Mail, and Special Delivery
- Handwritten or Poorly Typed Addresses
- Oily Stains or Discolorations
- Protruding Wires or Tinfoil
- Personal and/or Restrictive Markings - *e.g. Confidential*
- Incorrect Titles with Name or Titles with No Name
- Excessive Weight, Rigid, or Bulky
- Strange Odor
- Visual Distractions
- Excessive Postage / No Return Address
- Misspelled Common Words
- Lopsided/Uneven
- Excessive Wrapping, Taping, and/or Securing

ANTHRAX IS NOT CONTAGIOUS

It cannot be transmitted from person to person.

POTENTIAL EXPOSURE PATHS

3-PRIMARY TYPES

1. CUTANEOUS

Contact through an open wound or cut/broken skin.

Initial Symptoms:

Typically appear in 1-6 days in the form of a painless blister-like pustule or black-colored lesion.

2. INGESTION

Typically as a result from eating undercooked infected meat.

Initial Symptoms:

Typically appear in 1-6 days in the form of acute abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea.

3. INHALATION

Direct inhaling of significant quantities of anthrax spores.

Initial Symptoms:

Typically appear in 1-6 days in the form of a fever and/or cough, depression, fatigue, respiratory distress, and shock.

ANTHRAX CAN BE TREATED

If symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE ACTIONS

REMAIN CALM

Immediately close the letter/package and place it down, in a plastic bag, a confined space, or simply cover it with an empty waste basket.

Do not touch the item again. Keep persons away from the area in which the item was opened.

NOTIFY SECURITY

Thoroughly wash your hands (*from elbows downward*) with soap and water. Clothing and other items worn at the time of potential exposure should be removed and placed/sealed in plastic bags.

Follow instructions given by security and emergency responders.

RECOMMENDED PREVENTATIVE METHODS/MEASURES

Establish and adhere to sound facility and department-wide mail screening programs.

Confirm type/extent of local USPS screening measures.

Sort letters/packages prior to opening (i.e. questionable/suspicious to non-threat). Re-scrutinize all possible threats.

Open mail and packages with a letter opener on a cleared counter/table surface.

Keep mail and packages in an upright position when opening.

Never open a letter and blow into it to remove the contents.

If you wear gloves use care not to infect yourself while removing and discarding them.

CJES