



## agriculture & rural development

Department:  
agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

# ANTHRAX

## The Disease

Anthrax is primarily a disease of herbivores (cattle, sheep etc as well as wildlife e.g. Kudu and Zebra) although all mammals, including humans, can contract the disease. The disease is caused by the spore forming bacteria *Bacillus anthracis*.

Anthrax in herbivores is typically characterized by the rapid death of healthy animals, often without any preceding clinical symptoms. If symptoms are observed, they may include a high temperature, muscle tremors, and breathing difficulties followed by convulsions, collapse and death.

Animals suspected of having died from Anthrax should not be cut open as this will result in hardy anthrax spores contaminating the environment. These spores can survive in the environment for many years and are not easily destroyed, and if ingested by other animals while grazing will result in further cases of Anthrax.

The disease also has zoonotic potential and thus is a health threat to any person who either opens the carcass (inhales spores), handles infected carcasses or eats undercooked meat from the carcass (ingests spores).

## Diagnosis

The diagnosis of Anthrax in animals is based on the case history, clinical symptoms, and blood smears taken from the intact carcass.

## Prevention

An anthrax vaccine is available and susceptible animals should initially be vaccinated at 3-6 months of age and thereafter annually. The vaccine is a live vaccine and the animals should not be treated with antibiotics from 10 days before vaccination to 10 days post vaccination.

## **Control**

Anthrax is a controlled disease and thus suspected and confirmed cases of anthrax should be reported to the nearest State Veterinarian. Anthrax vaccination is compulsory in terms of the regulations of the Animal Diseases Act 1984 and therefore no compensation is paid by the State for animals that die or are put down as a result of an Anthrax outbreak.

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