

[REDACTED]

From: Ken McKell <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, 6 June 2016 12:32 PM
To: wcreg2016
Subject: RE: Review of the Workers Compensation Regulation 2010
Attachments: WorkSafe Victoria Q fever Prevention Guidance Note April 2013.pdf

Please also read and consider the above attached WorkSafe Victoria Guidance Note regarding Q fever.

Regards,

Ken McKell

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From: Ken McKell
Sent: Monday, 6 June 2016 12:28 PM
To: 'wcreg2016@sira.nsw.gov.au'
Subject: Review of the Workers Compensation Regulation 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

I provide the following comment in relation to the proposed amendments to the Workers Compensation Regulation 2010.

On page 12 of the public consultation draft subclause (2) of clause 4 of Part 2 - Work Related Diseases, it refers to Column 1 of Schedule 1 of the Regulation, which prescribes the diseases, with Column 2 prescribing the kinds of employment. I am not proposing any changes to the wording in this section of the Regulation, but I do recommend changes in Schedule 1 in Column 2 on page 78 of the public consultation draft.

In relation to the reference to Brucellosis, Leptospirosis and Q fever - the current wording in Column 2 on page 78 is deficient as it does not cover the full range of ways that persons can contract such diseases.

Firstly, Brucellosis is bacteria that is found naturally in some animals including sheep, goats, cattle, deer, elk, pigs, and dogs. Brucellosis disease in humans is not common, though it does occur. People can get brucellosis by touching,

eating, drinking, or breathing in *Brucella* bacteria. This is called exposure to brucellosis. Not everybody who is exposed to brucellosis will get sick. Someone can get exposed to naturally-occurring brucellosis by:

- Touching the hair, skin, or meat of an infected animal
- Drinking raw or unpasteurized milk or eating raw milk products that are contaminated with *Brucella* bacteria
- Breathing air contaminated with *Brucella* bacteria (especially farmers or meat workers)

Secondly, Leptospirosis is an infection caused by corkscrew- shaped bacteria called *Leptospira interrogans*. People get leptospirosis by contact with fresh water, wet soil or vegetation contaminated by the urine of infected animals, especially:

- rodents (for example rats and mice)
- cattle
- pigs
- horses
- dogs.

Both domestic and wild animals can carry leptospirosis and they pass the bacteria in their urine. The *Leptospira* bacteria can enter the body through broken skin, water-softened skin, mucous membranes (the thin moist lining of many parts of the body such as the nose, mouth, throat and genitals) or by swallowing or inhaling contaminated water. Leptospirosis is an occupational hazard for many people working outdoors or with animals, such as:

- dairy farmers
- sewer workers
- veterinarians
- abattoir workers
- military personnel.

Campers and people who participate in outdoor sports such as white water rafting, swimming or wading in contaminated lakes or rivers are also at risk.

Thirdly, Q fever is an infectious disease that can cause severe illness in some people. People usually get Q fever from farm animals (cattle, sheep and goats). Other animals may also be infected including wildlife and even dogs and cats.

People who work with or near animals are most at risk of getting Q fever, and particularly people working at animal processing plants or working with animals around birthing time.

Q fever is also an occupational hazard and includes but is not limited to the following:

- farmers
- dairy farmers
- stockyard workers
- abattoir workers
- veterinarians, veterinary staff and veterinary students
- professional dog and cat breeders and handlers
- wildlife and zoo workers working with high risk animals
- kangaroo shooters
- Laboratory personnel handling veterinary specimens or working with bacteria
- Anyone exposed to cattle, camels, sheep, goats and kangaroos or their products; and
- military personnel.

As you can see, these diseases can affect a wide range of occupations and industries and are not restricted to abattoirs or slaughterhouses. Therefore, the Schedule needs to be amended accordingly.

Regards,

Ken McKell

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Q fever prevention

Provides information for employers about preventing the transmission of Q fever in the workplace. Employees and members of the public who are at risk of contracting Q fever may also find this information useful.

April 2013

Query fever, commonly known as Q fever, is an infectious disease that is typically transmitted to humans from infected farm animals (such as cattle, sheep and goats), infected domestic animals (such as cats or dogs) or infected wild animals (such as kangaroos).

Transmission of the disease can be through direct or indirect contact with tissue and/or by-products of infected animals. Some examples include:

- inhaling airborne particles (such as dust) contaminated by faeces, urine or birth products
- drinking infected unpasteurised milk
- handling placentas (eg separating the foetus from the placenta).

For more information about Q fever (including symptoms), please refer to the publications listed under Further Information.

Some examples of who may be at risk of contracting Q fever include:

- abattoir workers
- farm and dairy workers
- stockyard workers
- livestock transporters
- sheep shearers, wool classers, pet and hide processors
- veterinary personnel
- people who work with raw animal products, particularly reproductive organs including laboratory personnel
- workers involved in rendering
- council/road workers who collect road kill
- administration and maintenance workers at Q fever risk workplaces, visitors to these workplaces and members of the public who are near these workplaces.

Key legal obligations for employers

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

(OHS Act) you have a duty to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of your employees and contractors. You also have a duty to ensure that other persons (such as visitors and members of the public) are not exposed to health and safety risks by the conduct of your business, so far as is reasonably practicable.

As an employer, you must consult with employees when identifying health and safety risks at the workplace and deciding on appropriate risk control measures (such as measures to prevent Q fever). For more information about consultation, please refer to WorkSafe publication, [Consultation on health and safety - A handbook for workplaces](#).

There may be circumstances where you are required to notify WorkSafe Victoria about incidents relating to Q fever that occur in your workplace. For example, you are required to let WorkSafe know if one of your employees contracts Q fever and requires treatment as an in-patient in hospital. See worksafe.vic.gov for more information about notifying about incidents.

How can the risk of Q fever be managed?

If your workplace is at risk of Q fever, risk control measures must be made available for your employees, contractors and other people who may be exposed to the disease.

Eliminate or reduce the risk of employees and other persons contracting Q fever at or from your workplace by implementing a pre-screening and vaccination program, using a particular workplace design, and using safe work practices. These are discussed in more detail below.

To control the risk of Q fever transmission you should also ensure all persons (including employees, contractors, visitors, sales representatives, buyers, council workers, essential service workers and members of the public) show proof of immunity status to Q fever before being allowed entry into your workplace.

Where a person cannot demonstrate

Q fever immunity, employers should refuse that person entry into the workplace. The Q fever register at qfever.org can provide further information regarding a person's immunity status.

1. Pre-screening and vaccination

WorkSafe regards Q fever vaccination as a high order risk control measure to eliminate the risk of contracting Q fever.

A Q fever pre-screening and vaccination program might include:

- a) screening new employees during induction
- b) if the relevant, ensuring they are vaccinated before starting at the workplace
- c) after immunity is established 15 days after the vaccination (not after the final skin prick test during screening), having them commence high Q fever risk work areas.

You should ensure all your employees without Q fever immunity status undergo pre-screening by a registered Q fever Vaccine Provider to determine the eligibility to be vaccinated (some people may be immune from past exposure to Q fever or may be likely to develop unpleasant side effects from the vaccine).

Eligible persons

The vaccination process should only be done by doctors registered as Q fever Vaccine Providers. The Australian Q fever Register at qfever.org maintains a list of trained medical practitioners for Q fever vaccination services.

Ineligible persons

Where an employee is not immune to Q fever and either declines or is otherwise ineligible to be vaccinated following medical advice, you should implement the following risk control measures:

- provide respiratory protection (P2 respirator)
- provide appropriate personal protective clothing (eg overalls/coat and rubber boots)
- encourage appropriate personal hygiene procedures
- only allow the person access to the low risk Q fever work areas.

People under the age of 15 and pregnant women should consult with a registered Q fever Vaccine Provider for further information regarding the eligibility for the Q fever vaccination.

2. Workplace design

You should identify high risk work areas where employees are more likely to be exposed to Q fever, such as:

- k foors
- livestock transport vehicles
- yards and pens

- office rooms
- skin sheds
- rendering areas
- handling footcavities (eg skin rooms).

Install appropriate ventilation and dust suppression systems in these areas to help reduce dust and other airborne particles from spreading. Ventilation systems should have the intake and exhaust vents separated to prevent recirculation of contaminated air.

Also provide appropriate washing and changing facilities near these areas to avoid cross-contamination.

3. Safe work practices

You should implement safe work practices, such as those below, to help eliminate or reduce the risk of Q fever transmission:

- Provide necessary information, instruction, training and supervision about Q fever to enable your employees to perform the work in a way that is safe and without risks to health.
- Arrange for personal clothing to be stored away from any work clothing that may be contaminated (work clothing should not be taken out of the workplace to prevent Q fever exposure to others outside the workplace).
- Prohibit eating, drinking, smoking, and napping in animal handling or processing areas. Require employees to thoroughly wash their hands before eating, drinking, smoking in designated areas, before going to the toilet and at the end of each shift (to prevent Q fever exposure to others outside the workplace).
- Clean and disinfect work areas regularly and ensure drainage is adequate.
- Decompose (soda ash) and bury animal by-products that are not suitable for processing.
- Pasteurise or boil milk.
- Implement an appropriate first aid program to ensure employees with open wounds are treated quickly.
- Muzzle dogs that are used to move livestock to prevent cross-contamination.
- Implement an ongoing maintenance program (eg routine inspection of ventilation and drainage systems and wash facilities etc).

In the meat industry, the risk of Q fever transmission can be further minimised by:

- training staff with appropriate knife skills to minimise damage to the udder and the rectum to reduce potentialy contaminated airborne particles from the release of milk and faeces respectively

- maintaining the integrity of the animal organs such as the bladder, intestines and uterus when they are removed and lowered to the eviscerating table, and
- washing stock on the race entering the kill floor with low pressure hoses to reduce the release of potentially contaminated airborne particles.

Further Information

Related WorkSafe publications

Beef cattle handling - A practical safety guide.

Dairy safety - A practical safety guide.

Related Industry publications

A Guide to Q fever and Q fever Vaccination. Australian Meat Industry Employees Union. meatesohs.org

The MLA OH&S Reference guide, Australian Red Meat Industry. Meat & Livestock Australia

redmeatnovat.on.com.au/ohs

The Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Ed, Section 3.17 Q fever. Department of Health and Ageing, Office of Health Protection. health.gov.au

Contact Details

Call us on: **1800 136 089**

Email us at: nfo@worksafe.vic.gov.au

For more information on occupational health and safety, go to WorkSafe's website: **worksafe.vic.gov.au**

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