Fact Sheet:
ANTHRAX

WHAT IS IT?

- Anthrax is a disease found in wild and domestic animals (i.e., sheep, cattle, goats).
- It can occur in humans when they are exposed to infected animals or tissue from infected animals.
- It is caused by a bacteria called Bacillus anthracis.

HOW DO YOU GET IT?

- Anthrax cannot be transmitted person to person.
- To contract the disease, you have to inhale it, eat it or put it in an open wound.

Inhalation: Anthrax spores are breathed in through the nose or mouth;
Skin: Spores enter the body through an open wound, such as a cut or abrasion, when handling contaminated products or infected animals;
Intestinal: The disease may occur after eating contaminated meat.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Symptoms of the disease vary depending on how the disease was contracted.
- If spores are inhaled, the first signs are usually flu-like symptoms, such as fever, fatigue, cough, and mild chest discomfort, followed by severe respiratory distress and shock.
- Painful blisters or purple patches may appear on skin.
- Symptoms usually occur within 7 days.

IS THERE A TREATMENT FOR ANTHRAX?

- Yes. Antibiotics taken after early exposure can control the disease.
- Treatment should be initiated early. Anthrax can be fatal if left untreated.

WHAT IS YOUR RISK LEVEL?

- Human anthrax is unusual in North America.
- When anthrax affects humans, it is usually due to an occupational exposure to infected animals or their products.

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Adapted from Fact Sheets developed by Health Canada and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention