Transmission risk of Cryptosporidium at agricultural/farm based workplaces and student practicum locations

Purpose

The purpose of this Safety Note is to raise awareness of the risks associated with Cryptosporidium infection transmission during worker or student activities at farm-based and agricultural workplaces.

Background

Cryptosporidiosis is an intestinal infection caused by the microscopic parasite, *Cryptosporidium parvum*. It is generally not a serious condition but for those with weakened immune systems, the disease can be debilitating, long lasting and in some cases, even life threatening. The most common symptom of Cryptosporidiosis is diarrhoea. Other symptoms include nausea, vomiting, fever, headache and loss of appetite. The parasite is shed in the faeces of infected humans and animals and is transferred to humans in several ways which include contact with farm animals and ingesting contaminated food or water.

Considerations for Prevention

The risks associated with exposure to disease causing organisms for UQ staff and students must be minimised as far as practicable. Risk assessments for farm-based activities must ensure the following precautionary instructions are included as safety controls to avoid transmission of Cryptosporidium infection.

All staff and students on Farm/Agricultural based practicums are advised to:

- wash hands (and arms if exposed) after contact with cattle and other farm animals
- wash hands after direct contact with soil
- avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands or contaminated gloves
- avoid eating, drinking, smoking or applying make-up in animal holding areas
- avoid drinking untreated water and inadequately filtered water
- boil untreated water or water of unknown quality for at least one minute before drinking
- avoid drinking unpasteurised milk or eating unpasteurised milk products
- wash fruit and vegetables before eating them
- avoid ingesting water in swimming pools or other recreational water
- wear appropriate personal protective equipment for the task (particularly if an animal displays signs of illness)
- inform their GP that they work with cattle or other animals, should symptoms of an illness develop

Further information about Cryptosporidium is located on the Queensland Health website.

For further information, contact the OHS Division on extension 52365 or ohs@uq.edu.au

Director
Occupational Health and Safety