

## **Streptococcus zooepidemicus**

### **Background Information**

*Streptococcus zooepidemicus* is a bacterium that infects animals, including cattle and horses. It can cause mastitis in cows. It is very rare in humans, but does cause extremely serious disease.

### **Organism**

*Streptococcus equi* subspecies *zooepidermicus*

### **Incidence and Transmission**

It is a very rare human disease.

It is spread from animals to humans by direct contact.

The most common source of infection historically was drinking unpasteurised milk.

### **Occupations and processes where *Streptococcus zooepidemicus* may present a risk**

Occupational exposure to *Streptococcus zooepidemicus* may occur in those who:

- are in contact with infected animals – particularly horses and cattle; or
- work with materials or products from infected animals.

Occupations where there may be a risk of occupationally acquired *Streptococcus zooepidemicus* infection include:

- farmers;
- stable workers;
- dairy workers; and
- veterinary surgeons.

### **Clinical Information**

The incubation period is usually 1–3 days.

Symptoms are initially flu-like, with a fever, headache and sore throat. The disease often progresses to the lungs and blood stream and may cause meningitis, endocarditis, septic arthritis and inflammation of the kidneys.

Anyone with these severe symptoms should seek medical attention.

### **Control**

The following control measures reduce the risk of infection:

- Do not drink unpasteurised milk.
- Good occupational hygiene practices should be followed, especially washing with warm water and soap.
- Cuts and abrasions should be covered with waterproof plasters.
- A suitable disinfectant should be used.

### **Further Information**

[Public Health England – Streptococcus zooepidemicus](#)