

Department of Disease Control

Weekly Disease Forecast No.288_Brucellosis

(22 – 28 November 2020)

From the national disease surveillance system, the Department of Disease Control (DDC) revealed that this year up to 10 November, there were 9 brucellosis patients (no deaths). Most of the cases were in the northern and northeastern regions. Provinces with the highest number of cases were Phetchabun, Lamphun, and Nakhonratchasima respectively. Most of them were adults in the age groups 55 – 64 years, 35 – 44 years, and 65 years and over respectively.

From the DDC outbreak surveillance system, up to 18 November of this year, there were 6 incidents that fit with the investigation criteria in 4 provinces, i.e., three in Phetchabun and one each in Nakhonsawan, Singburi, and Nonthaburi. Investigations found that most of the cases were farmers who raised farm animals. Common risk factors were having direct contact with animals' aborted fetuses, reproductive tissues (e.g. placentas), wounds and carcasses, with bare hands and no protective gear. Some patients consumed raw goat milk.

Although the number of cases were low, it is noted with concerns that there were already 2 incidents occurred in November. This weekly disease forecast has projected that due to the continue occurrence since the beginning of this year, brucellosis infection is likely to continue sporadically.



Brucellosis is a bacterial zoonotic disease mainly affecting goats, sheep, cattle, swine, and dogs. The infection is transmitted to humans directly through skin wounds or scratches that is in contact with infected animals' aborted fetuses, and reproductive tissues, placentas, blood, amniotic fluid or urine. Transmission can also occur indirectly by ingestion of animal products particularly raw milk. Inhalation of *Brucella* organisms among people who work in the livestock sector is not common. Human-to-human transmission is very rare.

The Department of Disease Control recommends preventive measures: 1) do not consume raw milk, i.e. drink only pasteurized or boiled milk, 2) farm workers should use rubber gloves, as well as rubber boots, especially when contacting aborted fetuses, reproductive tissues, wounds and carcasses and 3) livestock animals must be kept away from human housing premises.

Brucellosis symptoms include fever, chills, headaches, sweats (more during the night), muscle aches, joint pains, back pain, weight loss, and physical weakness. Brucellosis may also cause long lasting symptoms including recurrent fevers, joint pain, and fatigue that might persist for months or over a year. Seeking medical care and informing the history of animal exposure or consumption of raw milk will help with the rapid disease diagnosis.

The most rational approach for preventing human brucellosis is by pasteurization of animal milk and by control and elimination of the infection in farm animals. This can be done by quarantine of new animal flocks. If there is animal death or abortion, owners must notify the District Livestock Officers to test for the disease. Animals with positive test result must be culled.

For queries or additional information, please call DDC hotline 1422.

