

5 core facts you should know about brucellosis

1. **It is a herd disease!** This is a disease that threatens the sustainability of livestock herds in South Africa. Animals that become infected may take up to three years to react to tests but will remain a danger to cattle and people on the farm. If one animal in your herd tests positive for brucellosis, the whole herd is considered infected and can be placed under quarantine. This is due to the chronic (long term) nature of the disease and slow onset of symptoms caused by *Brucella* bacteria. Animals that tested negative at first, will often test positive on another round of tests. There is no cure and all cases must be reported to State Veterinary Services, as this is a controlled disease.
2. **It affects your pocket!** Cattle infected with brucellosis may abort, thus you lose potentially healthy calves and production. Calving intervals will increase, resulting in fewer calves born per cow per year. Milk production decreases, which means less milk for sale in dairy herds and a reduction in potential to produce a calf in beef herds. Infected calvings and abortions will contaminate the environment with millions of *Brucella* bacteria, exposing more of your animals to the disease.
3. **You can buy in a disaster!** Insist on only buying animals that come from herds that have tested negative for brucellosis in the last year. Insist on proof. Ideally, always quarantine newly acquired animals and test them again before mixing them with the rest of your herd. Be careful - don't ruin your farm and your future.
4. **Your family and workers can get sick!** *Brucella* bacteria can infect humans and cause fever, flu-like symptoms and chronic disease. Humans can get infected by assisting with infected calvings, handling infected placenta or abortions, drinking unpasteurised milk from infected animals and slaughtering infected animals at home. This disease can cause infertility in both men and women.
5. **Vaccination is a must!** It is legislated under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984) that all heifer calves between 4-8 months must be vaccinated with a registered vaccine (S19 from OBP or RB51 from MSD). Vaccination strengthens your cows' immune response to the disease and protects your herd and your investment.

Compiled by the Brucellosis steering committee of the National Animal Health Forum

Vaccinate, Educate, Test (VET)