



# Anthrax in Idaho

## *Information for livestock owners*

February 2026

In February 2026, Idaho officials announced that anthrax had caused the death of beef cattle in Cassia County.

### **Distribution and Outbreaks**

Anthrax, which is caused by a bacteria called *Bacillus anthracis*, is naturally found in many parts of the western and midwestern United States. The map to the right shows areas of the US that could have anthrax spores in the environment. Anthrax forms spores that can lay dormant in the environment for decades until weather and soil conditions allow the spores to become infectious.

Livestock become infected by breathing in spores or eating contaminated plants, soil, or water. These outbreaks are usually seen following heavy rains after a drought or during construction when the soil is disturbed. The last known cases in Utah were in 1975 in Tooele and Davis counties.

### **Signs in Livestock**

Sudden death is the most common sign of infection in livestock. Other signs include weakness, staggering, fever, difficulty breathing, and bloody diarrhea. In animals that die, blood around the mouth, nose, and rectum is common. Carcasses bloat and decompose rapidly, and may not go through rigor mortis (the stiffening seen after death).

Anthrax is not spread from one live animal to another. Vaccination can be used to prevent the disease, but because cases are so rare, the vaccine is usually only used in areas with recent outbreaks.

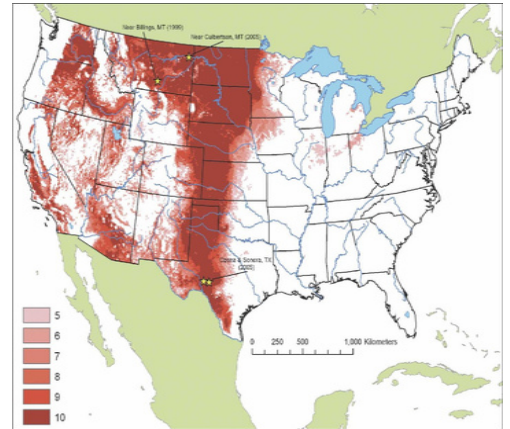
### **Risk to People and Other Animals**

Anyone who comes across dead livestock or wildlife that they suspect have died from anthrax should not touch or open the carcass. Opening the carcass may release hundreds to thousands of infectious spores into the environment. These spores can infect people through cuts or skin wounds, by accidentally being eaten, or by being inhaled. If you suspect anthrax and are submitting samples to a laboratory, notify the laboratory ahead of time so staff can take appropriate precautions. More information on human anthrax can be found on the Utah Department of Health and Human Services website at <https://epi.utah.gov/anthrax/>.

Hunters should avoid harvesting sick wildlife and should report sick or dead wildlife to their regional Division of Wildlife Resources office. While rare, dogs and other carnivores can become infected by eating contaminated carcasses.

### **Reporting**

Anthrax is a reportable disease in Utah. Any livestock owner, veterinarian, or laboratory that suspects anthrax in a domestic animal must report it to the State Veterinarian's office at the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. This reporting allows UDAF and the Division of Wildlife Resources to monitor livestock and wildlife in the area and to notify nearby herds of the risk



Map from Blackburn, J, et al, Modeling the geographic distribution of *Bacillus anthracis*, the causative agent of anthrax disease, for the contiguous United States using predictive ecological niche modeling, *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 2007. 77:1103.

