

### The Bare Facts

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#### Q Fever

- Q Fever is an infectious disease that can cause severe illness in some people.
- People usually get Q Fever from farm animals (cattle, sheep and goats). Other animals may also be infected including wildlife and even dogs and cats.
- People who work with or near animals are most at risk of getting Q Fever, and particularly people working at animal processing plants or working with animals around birthing time.
- Anyone at risk of exposure to Q Fever should have a test to see if they are protected from the disease.

#### Protection

- Individuals may be immune to Q Fever and cannot get the disease if they have ever been vaccinated with the Q Fever vaccine; or previously infected with Q Fever.

#### Q Fever and the Workplace

- Employers will want to make sure employees or contractors are protected from Q Fever before visiting the workplace to commence work.
- People working in high risk areas should be tested and vaccinated (if appropriate) to ensure protection against Q Fever in the workplace.

#### Testing and vaccination

Individuals at risk of exposure to Q Fever should consider vaccination. Before vaccination, individuals must have blood and skin tests to check if they have been previously exposed to Q Fever. Testing requires two visits to a health provider, seven (7) days apart. Individuals who test positive are immune and don't receive the vaccine. Individuals who test negative can be safely vaccinated.

Immunity to Q Fever typically develops approximately 15 days after vaccination. Individuals who have been vaccinated and work in a high-risk environment **should not commence work until after this time**. If an individual tests positive and does not need the vaccine, they are protected and can commence work once results are confirmed by the medical practitioner.

#### The Q Fever Register

- The Australian Q Fever Register was established to help employers and workers prevent Q Fever within the workplace, and make it easier for workers when commencing a new job, particularly in high risk industries.
- The Register is a database which stores information about the Q Fever immune status of individuals who have agreed to part of the register.
- If an individual is on the Register, the individual can quickly check their Q Fever immune status (or provide authority to their employers to check), and can commence work immediately without any delay due to the testing requirements.
- If an individual is not recorded on the Register they may need to be re-tested when changing jobs if they do not have evidence of their Q Fever immune status.
- No one can see or use the information on the Register without your permission.

### Want to know more?

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This Fact Sheet contains answers to common questions about Q Fever. For more information visit the Q Fever Register website ([www.qfever.org](http://www.qfever.org)), the Q Fever Facts website ([www.qfeverfacts.com.au](http://www.qfeverfacts.com.au)), or speak to a medical practitioner.

## **The Disease**

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### ***What is Q Fever?***

Q Fever is a disease that can be spread to humans mainly from cattle, sheep and goats. Infection is spread in the urine, faeces and milk, but birth fluids, the foetus and the placenta are the most dangerous sources. When infected fluids dry out, the germs may remain alive in the dust for years.

People can become infected by being splashed with infected fluids, or by breathing in infected dust.

When infected some people experience no clinical signs, while others just feel a little 'off colour' for a few days. Most people, however, feel like they have a bad case of the 'flu, with fever and sweating, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea for 7 to 10 days. For most people, these signs pass and there are no more problems.

A small number of people may have complications that may affect a variety of body organs. It is very rare for anybody to die of Q Fever. Any individual with existing heart problems may have an increased risk of contracting infection of the heart valves associated with Q Fever infection. Another rare complication is Post Q Fever Fatigue Syndrome which is characterised by extreme tiredness and weakness, even after minor exercise, muscle pains, headaches, fever, and depression. These symptoms may last for years, and may make work, and many other aspects of normal life difficult. Preventing these potentially debilitating complications of Q Fever is the main aim of Q Fever vaccination.

### ***Q Fever immunity status***

Individuals may be immune to Q Fever and cannot get the disease if they have ever had:

- a vaccination against Q Fever,
- a test to say that they are immune, or
- they have been previously diagnosed by a medical practitioner as having had Q Fever.

If an individual doesn't know if they have had the disease, or whether they have been previously vaccinated against Q Fever then their employer will request the individual to have a test to check if they are immune. If the individual is not immune then they will require a vaccination to protect them from Q Fever in the future (subject to the medical practitioner checking contra-indications to vaccination such as allergy to eggs).

## **The Register**

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### ***What is the Australian Q Fever Register?***

The Australian Q Fever Register (Register) is a database which stores information about the Q Fever immune status of individuals who have agreed to be part of the Register and their data has been submitted to the Register.

### ***What is the Register for?***

The purpose of the Register is to help people working in higher risk industries avoid getting the disease. It does this by allowing employers to quickly find out if their employees are immune or not. If an individual is not immune, they can be vaccinated before they are exposed to the risk of infection. The primary focus of the Register is for individuals directly employed or associated with the meat processing industry or affiliated livestock industries.

### ***How will the Register help?***

The Register enables checking of Q Fever immune status if an individual has previously been vaccinated but has lost their details, or if they have forgotten whether they have been vaccinated. This saves expensive and time-consuming re-testing to check whether they are protected from the disease before commencing employment in higher risk industries.

The Register assists individuals by storing their immune status (including vaccination/ skin test details). This makes it easier to prove Q Fever immune status when changing employment.

If an individual agrees to be on the Register, their details can be checked immediately, so that, if they are immune, they can commence work immediately without any delay.

Where an individual is not recorded on the Register they will need to be tested, and if they are not already immune, will need to arrange to be vaccinated.

## **Q Fever and the Australian Q Fever Register**

### ***What are the benefits of being on the Register?***

If an individual is recorded on the Register as having immunity to Q Fever they can be safely employed (in a position where they may be exposed to Q Fever) saving the time, inconvenience and cost of unnecessary testing. It may also assist medical practitioners avoid the risks of reactions that may occur when an individual who is already immune is unnecessarily vaccinated.

### ***Who owns the Register and the data?***

The Register and data contained within it are owned by the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC). AMPC is the research and development organisation for the red meat processing industry. For further information about AMPC go to the AMPC website at [www.ampc.com.au](http://www.ampc.com.au)

### ***Who manages the Register?***

The Register is operated by an independent Data Manager appointed by AMPC, currently AUS-MEAT Limited.

### ***Who is AUS-MEAT Limited?***

AUS-MEAT is a service provider company jointly owned by AMPC and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) with a long history in serving the Australian meat and livestock industries. AUS-MEAT is one of Australia's leading agribusiness auditing, certification and training providers and operates under recognised quality management systems and is ISO 9001: 2015 accredited.

### ***Whose information is on the Register?***

The Register is designed to store relevant information on the Q Fever immune status of individuals who are at risk of being exposed to Q Fever and who have agreed to be part of the Register.

Nevertheless, anyone who has been tested or vaccinated, or has contracted Q Fever, can be recorded on the Register, regardless of their occupation.

### ***How is information recorded in the Register?***

Individuals may enter and submit their own information to be recorded on the Register or information may be entered into the Register by Authorised Users (employers or medical practitioners) or their approved staff (e.g. an Occupational Health and Safety Nurse).

Before any information about an individual is recorded in the Register, each individual must complete a Personal Information and Consent form. This form contains basic information to identify an individual, and shows that an individual has agreed to be recorded on the Register.

Individuals may elect not to have their Q Fever immune status entered on the Register.

### ***What information is kept in the Register?***

There are two types of information on the Register: information which identifies an individual, and information about an individual's Q Fever immune status.

The identification information includes:

- first name, middle name/s and surname,
- date of birth,
- gender, and
- a secret question and answer. This is a question that only individuals are likely to know the answer to, and helps Register staff confirm an individual's identity if they ever need to call the Register helpline.

The immune status information includes:

- Date of any vaccination,
- Date of any screening test, the test type and test result,
- Q Fever immune status.

## **Q Fever and the Australian Q Fever Register**

### ***Does anybody else have access to this information?***

The Register may, from time to time, receive requests from research providers for data on the Register for research purposes. The only data that may be approved for release is aggregated information in the Register for statistical and surveillance purposes, for example, the number of people diagnosed with Q Fever, the number vaccinated, the percent of positive test results and so on.

All requests must be submitted to AMPC for consideration for approval. If approved, aggregated, anonymous data may be provided. No information is provided that enables individuals to be identified. No personal information is provided or sold for any commercial or marketing purpose, nor released to any government authorities. All information is managed in accordance with the Australian Q Fever Register Privacy Policy [www.qfever.org/privacypolicy](http://www.qfever.org/privacypolicy).

### ***How can the information be used?***

An individual's information can only be used by the individual, or (with an individual's permission) the individual's employer or medical practitioner to find out an individual's Q Fever immune status.

The information contained within the Register may be used for research purposes from time to time, but only under the controls described above.

### ***What about discrimination?***

In addition to the protection offered by State and Commonwealth legislation, Authorised Users of the Register (employers in particular) must sign an Agreement stating that they will not discriminate against an individual in any way, either on the basis of the information contained on the Register, because an individual is not on the Register, or because an individual fails to inform them of their Register Number.

### ***Am I on the Register?***

Information about an individual can only be recorded on the Register if the individual has provided permission and signed a Consent Form.

Participation on the Register is voluntary and a personal decision of each individual. The main reason to register is if your Q Fever immune status may need to be verified by an employer to work at higher risk sites for contracting Q Fever.

### ***How can I find out what information is kept on me?***

All individuals recorded on the Register have the right to know what information is kept, and to request that any errors be corrected.

Whenever a Q Fever eStatement is issued, a covering letter with the full details of the information held by the Register is sent with it.

An individual can also call the Q Fever Register Help-Line (1300 QFEVER) identify themselves, and request their details or to correct errors.

## **ACCESSING THE REGISTER TO CHECK Q FEVER IMMUNE STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS**

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### ***Who can access the information about an individual's Q Fever immune status?***

The Register has very strict privacy controls. The information is stored in a secure database accessible online.

After being added to the Register individuals can access the information on their immune status using a secure password system either by logging into their online profile or by contacting the helpline. If an individual provides permission at the time of registration, the information may also be accessed by Authorised Users including:

- your current employer,
- a new employer, when you apply for a new job, or
- your medical practitioner/health professional.

Register information can be accessed by Register Helpline staff.

## **Q Fever and the Australian Q Fever Register**

### ***How can employers or medical practitioner/ access the information?***

Employers and medical practitioners who have applied to be Authorised Users can access the Register using a secure web page.

To logon to the Register, they must use a password supported by a security system similar to that used in Australia for Internet banking. Any information that is uploaded or downloaded from the Register is encrypted to ensure it is kept private and secure

An Authorised User can only access an individual's information if they know the individual's name and date of birth or Q Fever Register Number (a unique number for each individual on the Register). The only way that an Authorised User can get the Q Fever Register Number is if that is provided to them by the individual.

### ***What is an Authorised User?***

An Authorised User is an individual associated with an Organisation that has been granted access to the Register. Eligible organisations include meat processing establishments, Medical Practices or other Organisations as determined by AMPC.

Authorised Users are bound by extensive Terms and Conditions prescribing the basis upon which they can access and use information in the Register.

### ***How do I become an Authorised User?***

To become an Authorised User follow the Steps below:

- Step 1. Download, print and complete the Organisation & Authorised User Application forms - Each User must be associated with an Organisation. Each individual User within an Organisation is required to complete a separate application.
- Step 2. Submit the Application Form(s) to the Register - Application Form(s) can be either uploaded online or submitted to the Register by email.
- Step 3. Await Confirmation - Register staff will review, approve and create each Application. Once approved an Authorised User account will be confirmed and each applicant will be advised of a unique login and password.

### ***How long does to take to be approved as an Authorised User?***

Applications for new Organisations/Authorised Users will be processed within two (2) business days of receipt. The best way to expediate the process is to ensure that the Application Form is fully completed and submitted to the Register electronically.

### ***How do I find an individual's immune status?***

To find an individual's Q Fever status from the Register an organisation must first be Authorised, and one or more staff members appointed as Authorised Users.

Authorised Users will be given a user name and password for use when accessing the Register online.

To access an individuals' details, Authorised Users will require the following information about that individual:

- Full Name
- Date of birth
- Q Fever Register Number

Authorised Users may only access an individual's details with the permission of that individual. Authorised Users will need to ask the individual what their Q Fever Register Number is before being able to access the information.

## **Q FEVER eSTATEMENT/Q FEVER CARD**

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### ***What is the Q Fever eStatement?***

Once an individual's details are entered into the Register (or new information is added), Q Fever Register eStatement will be emailed to the individual.

## Q Fever and the Australian Q Fever Register

This eStatement contains the following information:

- Individual's name
- current Q Fever immune status, and
- Q Fever Register Number

The eStatement should be kept and used to prove the individual's immune status in the future.

The eStatement includes similar information to the Q Fever Card that was issued by the Register previously.

### ***How do I obtain a replacement eStatement?***

A replacement eStatement can be obtained at any time by logging in to the Register and requesting an eStatement. Alternatively, the eStatement can be downloaded and saved on a mobile device.

### ***What is the Q Fever Register Number?***

Each individual that has provided consent to be recorded on the Register is issued a unique Q Fever Number. This number assists in identifying individuals on the register and forms part of the security requirements for individuals and Authorised Users accessing information regarding individuals on the Register.

### ***What happens if an individual forgets their Q Fever Register Number?***

An individual may be asked by their employer or medical practitioner for their Q Fever Register Number.

This number is required to enable Authorised Users (employers, medical practitioners) to check the Register to determine if the individual is immune to Q Fever.

Each individual recorded in the Register is issued with a unique Q Fever Register Number which is printed on their Q Fever eStatement/Card.

If an individual loses an eStatement (or previously issued card), or need the Q Fever Register Number and don't have an eStatement with them they can login to the Register and request a replacement eStatement or alternatively they can call the Register Help-Line (1300 733 837). Register staff will be able to advise the issued Q Fever Register Number for individuals that are able to confirm their identity credentials (name, date of birth, and secret question).

### ***Can I get a Q Fever Card?***

Previously, individuals that that elected to have their details recorded on the Register were issue a credit card sized Q Fever Card.

Effective from April 2018 the Q Fever Card is no longer available and has been replaced by an eStatement. The eStatement can be downloaded and saved on a mobile device.

The design of the eStatement also includes a section that is formatted to enable an individual to print, cut out and laminate the relevant information to enable this to be readily stored in a wallet.

### ***What if I lose my Q Fever Card?***

The Q Fever Card is no longer issued. If an individual loses their Q Fever Card, they can logon to the Register and access an eStatement that can be emailed or downloaded to a mobile device. Alternatively, an individual can telephone the Register Helpline and request for an eStatement to be issued.

The eStatement/Card is not required for Authorised Users (employers, medical practitioners) to access the information in the Register - they just need to know the Q Fever Register Number. An individual can if required obtain this number immediately by telephoning the Register Helpline.

## Contact the Australian Q Fever Register

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Helpline **1300 QFEVER** (1300 733 837)  
Fax (07) 3547 8444  
Email [register@qfever.org](mailto:register@qfever.org)  
Website [www.qfever.org](http://www.qfever.org)

Address: Australian Q Fever Register  
PO Box 3403  
TINGALPA DC QLD 4173