

Q FEVER - GERMANY (02): (BERLIN) LABORATORY ANIMAL, REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A ProMED-mail post

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Date: Fri 17 Dec 2021

Source: NTV [in German, machine trans., edited]

https://www.n-tv.de/der_tag/Ansteckendes-Q-Fieber-Charite-toetet-1200-Versuchstiere-article23007796.html

The Berlin Charite kills more than 1000 small laboratory animals because of a bacterial contamination. The clinic association announced that so-called *Coxiella* were detected "within a narrowly limited area" of the animal testing laboratory. The area will now be disinfected. In addition, "around 1200 small rodents" would have to be killed, "in whose direct keeping area positive results have repeatedly been confirmed."

According to the information, *Coxiella* can trigger the disease coxiellosis, also called Q fever, which can lead to flu-like symptoms in people, among other symptoms. "Animals and people in the immediate vicinity of an infected animal can become infected by inhaling dust and droplets," explained the Charite.

In addition to the duty of care toward employees, "aspects of animal welfare" also played a role in the measures introduced, it said. "The Charite regrets the necessity of killing the test animals."

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[*Coxiella burnetii*, the causative pathogen of Q fever, is an obligate intracellular rickettsia-like bacterial pathogen, infective to a wide spectrum of animals (an OIE-notifiable animal disease) and to humans. Q fever is a recognised occupational zoonosis. All laboratory manipulations with live cultures or potentially infected/contaminated material must be performed at an appropriate biosafety and containment level determined by biorisk analysis.

Q fever is endemic in Germany (https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/7/5/01-0504_article).

In 2014, a Q fever outbreak occurred in Canadian and US travelers to Germany, where they received live sheep cell therapy (ProMED post <http://promedmail.org/post/20170416.4974554>).

The above report of an unusual event "within a narrowly limited area" of the Charite hospital would have benefitted from more detail. Laboratory animals may be bred in-house or introduced as SPF (specific pathogen-free) animals. Since no human cases are mentioned, it may be assumed that the contamination, probably of few or very few laboratory animals, was discovered during an early stage of the event; confirmation or otherwise, as well as information on the animal species involved and the route of the pathogen's introduction, will be appreciated.

The "Charite - Universitätsmedizin Berlin" is one of Europe's largest university hospitals, affiliated with Humboldt University and Free University Berlin. It is one of Germany's most research-intensive medical institutions.

For further relevant background information, please refer to the commentary of Mod.ML in ProMED post <http://promedmail.org/post/20210926.8698730>. - Mod.AS

HealthMap/ProMED map of Berlin, Germany: <https://promedmail.org/promed-post?place=8698730,5857>

[See Also: Q fever - Germany: (Berlin) sheep, human, laboratory staff, RFI

<http://promedmail.org/post/20210926.8698730> 2017

Q fever - Germany: (RP) sheep cell therapy, 2014 <http://promedmail.org/post/20170416.4974554> 2015

Q fever - USA, Canada: ex Germany (RP) sheep cell therapy, 2014 <http://promedmail.org/post/20151002.3684869> 2014

Q fever - Canada (02): ex Germany (RP) sheep cell therapy <http://promedmail.org/post/20141014.2863025>

Q fever - Germany: (RP) ovine, control, vaccination, RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20141007.2839528>

Q fever - Canada: ex Germany, sheep cell therapy, RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20141006.2828583>

Q fever - Germany: (BY) human, animal <http://promedmail.org/post/20140511.2464862> 2011

Q fever - Germany (02): (NW, HE) background <http://promedmail.org/post/20110225.0620>

Q fever - Germany: (NW, HE) human, animal <http://promedmail.org/post/20110223.0604> 2009

Q fever - Australia: (SA), laboratory-acquired <http://promedmail.org/post/20091225.4345>]

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