



# Protecting Yukon from anthrax

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ANIMAL HEALTH PROGRAM

## Contact

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## Rapid testing for anthrax available

Anthrax has never been identified in Yukon. This disease tends to occur where it has earlier been found because the spores contaminate the soil. **The risk of an anthrax outbreak in Yukon is very low.**

Because anthrax recently killed several hundred bison in the Northwest Territories, the Animal Health Unit has acquired test kits that can be used by a veterinarian to diagnose a suspected case of anthrax involving ruminants (e.g. cattle, bison) or horses. The tests take just a few minutes to do and can be done in the field at the site of the carcass.

### When to suspect anthrax

The death of two or more ruminants or horses within 48 hours is sufficient reason to test for anthrax as the possible cause. **Do not touch or move animals you suspect may have died from anthrax.** If possible, isolate other animals from the carcasses to prevent the spread of the disease. After you contact the Animal Health Unit, an animal health inspector or other veterinarian will come to examine the carcass at no cost to you. Further actions will depend on the results of the initial examination.

### Anthrax in animals and humans

Anthrax is a disease caused by the bacteria *Bacillus anthracis*. It survives in spore form in the soil for many years. Animals with anthrax will die quickly, sometimes within a few hours and with no prior signs of illness. Bloody fluid will often be seen leaking from the body openings (e.g. mouth, nostrils, anus) of animals that have died from anthrax. *Rigor mortis* may not set in. The carcasses and body fluids of animals that have died of anthrax are the source of a large number of spores. Spores are very hard to kill.



Anthrax can also infect humans. People usually get sores on their skin from exposure to infected animal carcasses, but anthrax can also infect the lungs and intestines.

Keep an eye on the health of your livestock. Should you ever suspect anthrax is present, the Animal Health Unit will quickly provide the tests needed to determine what needs to be done to safeguard the health of Yukon livestock and wildlife.