

HEALTH HAZARD INFORMATION SHEET

EBOLA

What is the Ebola virus?

The Ebola virus is a zoonotic pathogen. Five species of Ebola virus have been identified; four of them are native to parts of Africa and can be transmitted to humans. The fifth, known as Ebola Reston, has been found in the Philippines and is not known to infect humans.

What are the natural hosts of the Ebola virus?

Ebola virus is believed to be carried by fruit bats in Western Africa, and also infects non-human primates such as monkeys and chimpanzees. The Ebola species which can infect humans have not been found in livestock. The Ebola Reston virus, which cannot infect humans, has been identified in swine in the Philippines only.

What is Ebola Virus Disease?

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is an infection caused by the Ebola virus. Signs and symptoms are similar to influenza or some foodborne diseases, and may include fever, headache, muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain and unexplained bleeding or bruising. EVD is often fatal. During the 2014 outbreak in Western Africa about half of those infected have died; in previous outbreaks the number has been around 90%.

How is Ebola transmitted?

Ebola is passed between people only through close contact. Ebola is not transmissible through the air. Transmission can only happen if body fluids (such as blood, urine or sweat) from somebody with active symptoms enter another person's body. Ebola is not spread through the air or by casual skin-to-skin contact. The spread of Ebola during outbreaks is usually associated with caring for or cleaning up after infected patients, or by handling victims' bodies during traditional burial ceremonies. The only example of foodborne transmission has occurred when people in Africa have consumed infected "bush meat", such as wild apes.

Are FSIS employees potentially exposed to Ebola virus in their workplaces?

There is no reason to believe FSIS employees may be exposed to the Ebola virus in their workplaces. Ebola has not been transmitted in the U.S., and it is not present as a zoonotic pathogen and therefore not found in animals or livestock. Exposure would only be possible if an employee had close contact with the body fluids of an individual who is ill with Ebola.

What should I do if I suspect I've been exposed to Ebola?

If you suspect you have been exposed to Ebola, you should contact your physician immediately or go to an emergency room.

Is it possible to become infected with Ebola by handling bushmeat?

According to the CDC, people in Africa have become infected with Ebola after butchering and processing meat from infected animals. FSIS personnel should not handle bushmeat without proper personal protective equipment. See the link below “Facts about Bushmeat and Ebola” for more information.

How should training for this Health Hazard Information Sheet be recorded?

Per requirements found in FSIS Directive 4791.1 Section IX, all occupational health and safety training is to be recorded using either AgLearn or FSIS form 3530-12. Training records are to include the topics covered, date, and employee name. The Agency is to retain all training records for a minimum of five years.”

Useful Links

CDC Ebola website: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>.

CDC Ebola Transmission Question & Answer: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/transmission/qas.html>.

Facts about Bushmeat and Ebola: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/bushmeat-and-ebola.pdf>.

Please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist assigned to your district if you have any questions about this information sheet. Questions can also be submitted to AskEmployeeSafety@fsis.usda.gov.