

Zoonotic Disease Risk Handout

This information sheet is being supplied to you to help assist you in understanding risks faced in the conduct of your job at The University of Toledo (UT). It is supplied to personnel identified as having a reasonable occupational exposure risk to the agent described. This information has been developed with the assistance of the UT Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine, Office of Health and Safety and the Office of Occupational Medicine. Questions and concerns should be directed to any of the units.

Cryptosporidiosis: Cryptosporidia are tiny protozoan parasites of the gastrointestinal tract. Infection risk is ever present when dealing with domestic livestock but a wide range of other mammals and birds may carry it. The organism routinely causes diarrhea in young calves. In symptomatic and clinically normal animals, the organism is shed in the feces.

In immunocompetent persons, infection varies from no symptoms to mild enteritis to marked watery diarrhea without mucus or gross or microscopic blood. Low-grade fever, malaise, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, anorexia and weight loss may occur. The infection is generally self-limited and lasts a few days to about 2 weeks. In immunologically deficient patients, the illness is characterized by profuse, cholera-like diarrhea and by fever, severe malabsorption, marked weight loss, and lymphadenopathy. In AIDS, infection may involve any part of the GI tract, and multisystemic involvement has been described, especially involving the respiratory tract. Treatment is palliative.

As transmission is by the fecal-oral route, hand washing is important to minimizing exposure. Contaminated water sources have also been implicated in transmission and should be avoided.

When ill, it is important to discuss your possible occupational exposures with your attending physician as this information can be instrumental in timely diagnosis and treatment.