Q fever is a zoonotic disease caused by the rickettsial organism *Coxiella burnetii*. As stated in the CDC/NIH document *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories* (BMBL) 5th edition, exposure to naturally infected, often asymptomatic, pregnant sheep and their birth products is a documented hazard to personnel. Because human infection is generally via the aerosol route, indoor housing or procedure rooms (where aerosols can concentrate) for sheep are high risk areas. The organism is resistant to desiccation and persists in the environment for long periods, contributing to the widespread dissemination of infectious aerosols. The risk of infection is high because the infectious dose by inhalation is less than 10 microorganisms².

Recommendations for the control of Q fever in a research facility are available and should be applied rigorously in surgical, laboratory, and housing areas used for sheep.²

It is extremely important that laboratory doors be kept closed when experiments are in progress.

**Why is annual testing important for my safety?**

- Exposure to naturally infected, often asymptomatic pregnant sheep and their birth products is a documented occupational hazard in biomedical facilities using sheep as research animals. Institutional outbreaks of Q fever have occurred not only in those researchers working directly with sheep, but also in persons such as janitors, secretaries and others who worked in the same facility and who had no direct contact with the animals.¹
- The Biosafety Occupational Health Program provides the needed annual seriology tests and the Environmental Health and Safety Department provides the respiratory protection for anyone who works with pregnant sheep inside facilities. These services are at no cost to the employee.

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¹ Guidelines for Biomedical Facilities Using Sheep as Research Animals

² Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals by the Institute of Laboratory Animals Resources
http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309052998

³ Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories 5th Edition - Section VIII - Rickettsial Agents