

Understanding Brucellosis: A Threat to Livestock and Public Health

Sofia Adam*

Department of Child Health, Hawassa University, Ethiopia

Abstract

Brucellosis, often referred to as undulant fever or Malta fever, is a bacterial zoonotic disease caused by members of the genus *Brucella*. This infectious disease primarily affects animals, particularly livestock such as cattle, goats, sheep, and pigs, but it can also pose a significant risk to human health. With a global distribution and economic implications for agriculture, brucellosis remains a persistent concern for both veterinary and public health authorities. This article aims to provide an in-depth exploration of brucellosis, its causes, transmission, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention strategies.

Keywords: Brucellosis; Zoonotic disease; Health authorities.

Introduction

Brucellosis is caused by various species of the genus *Brucella*, including *Brucella abortus*, *B. melitensis*, *B. suis*, *B. canis*, and *B. ovis*, among others. These Gram-negative, non-spore-forming bacteria are primarily intracellular pathogens, capable of surviving and replicating within host cells. Each *Brucella* species exhibits a specific host preference, with *B. abortus* primarily infecting cattle, *B. melitensis* infecting goats and sheep, and *B. suis* infecting pigs and wild animals [1,2].

Methodology

The transmission of brucellosis typically occurs through direct contact with infected animals or consumption of contaminated animal products, such as unpasteurized milk or cheese. Infection can also occur through contact with contaminated environmental sources, including soil, water, and aborted fetal tissues. Humans can acquire brucellosis through occupational exposure, such as veterinarians, farmers, and abattoir workers, or through recreational activities, such as hunting or consuming raw dairy products [3].

Clinical manifestations

The clinical manifestations of brucellosis in both animals and humans can vary widely, ranging from asymptomatic infection to severe systemic illness. In animals, brucellosis may cause reproductive disorders, including abortions, stillbirths, and infertility, as well as nonspecific symptoms such as fever, lethargy, and weight loss. In humans, brucellosis typically presents as a febrile illness with symptoms such as fever, sweats, fatigue, joint pain, and headache. Chronic brucellosis can lead to debilitating complications, including endocarditis, arthritis, and neurologic manifestations [4-6].

Diagnosis

Diagnosing brucellosis can be challenging due to its nonspecific clinical presentation and the need for specialized laboratory tests. In animals, diagnosis often relies on serological tests, such as the Rose Bengal test or the serum agglutination test, which detect antibodies against *Brucella* antigens. Culture-based methods can also be employed to isolate the bacteria from clinical specimens, although this approach is time-consuming and requires specialized laboratory facilities. In humans, diagnosis typically involves serological testing, blood culture, and molecular techniques, such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR), to detect *Brucella* DNA [7,8].

Treatment

Treatment of brucellosis in both animals and humans involves antimicrobial therapy with antibiotics such as doxycycline, rifampin, and streptomycin. However, treatment can be prolonged and may require combination therapy to achieve optimal efficacy, particularly in cases of chronic or relapsing infection. Early initiation of treatment is crucial to prevent complications and reduce the risk of transmission to others. In animals, control measures may also include vaccination, culling of infected animals, and biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of infection within herds or flocks [9,10].

Prevention strategies

Preventing brucellosis requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses both animal and human health interventions. In the agricultural sector, vaccination of livestock with attenuated or inactivated vaccines can help reduce the prevalence of brucellosis and minimize economic losses associated with reproductive losses. Additionally, strict biosecurity measures, such as quarantine protocols, animal movement restrictions, and hygiene practices, are essential for preventing the introduction and spread of infection within livestock populations. In the human population, public health measures such as pasteurization of milk and dairy products, education on safe food handling practices, and occupational health and safety guidelines can help reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission.

Brucellosis remains a significant threat to both animal and human health worldwide, with implications for agriculture, public health, and economic development. By understanding the causes, transmission dynamics, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention strategies of brucellosis, stakeholders can work together to mitigate the impact of this infectious disease and safeguard the health and well-being of both animals and humans. Through coordinated efforts at the local, national, and global levels, we can strive to control and eventually

***Corresponding author:** Sofia Adam, Department of Child Health, Hawassa University, Ethiopia, E-mail: sofia99@hotmail.com

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eliminate brucellosis as a public health concern.

Discussion

Brucellosis is a bacterial zoonotic disease caused by various species of the genus *Brucella*, including *B. abortus*, *B. melitensis*, and *B. suis*. It primarily affects animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, and pigs, but poses a significant risk to human health through direct contact with infected animals or consumption of contaminated animal products.

Clinical manifestations in animals include reproductive disorders like abortions and infertility, while humans typically experience a febrile illness with symptoms such as fever, sweats, fatigue, and joint pain. Diagnosis relies on serological tests and culture-based methods in animals, and serological testing and molecular techniques like PCR in humans.

Treatment involves antimicrobial therapy with antibiotics like doxycycline and rifampin, often requiring prolonged courses and combination therapy for optimal efficacy.

Conclusion

Prevention strategies include vaccination of livestock, strict biosecurity measures, and public health interventions such as pasteurization of dairy products and education on safe food handling practices. Brucellosis represents a significant threat to both animal and human health globally, necessitating coordinated efforts to control its spread and mitigate its impact on agriculture, public health, and economic development.

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