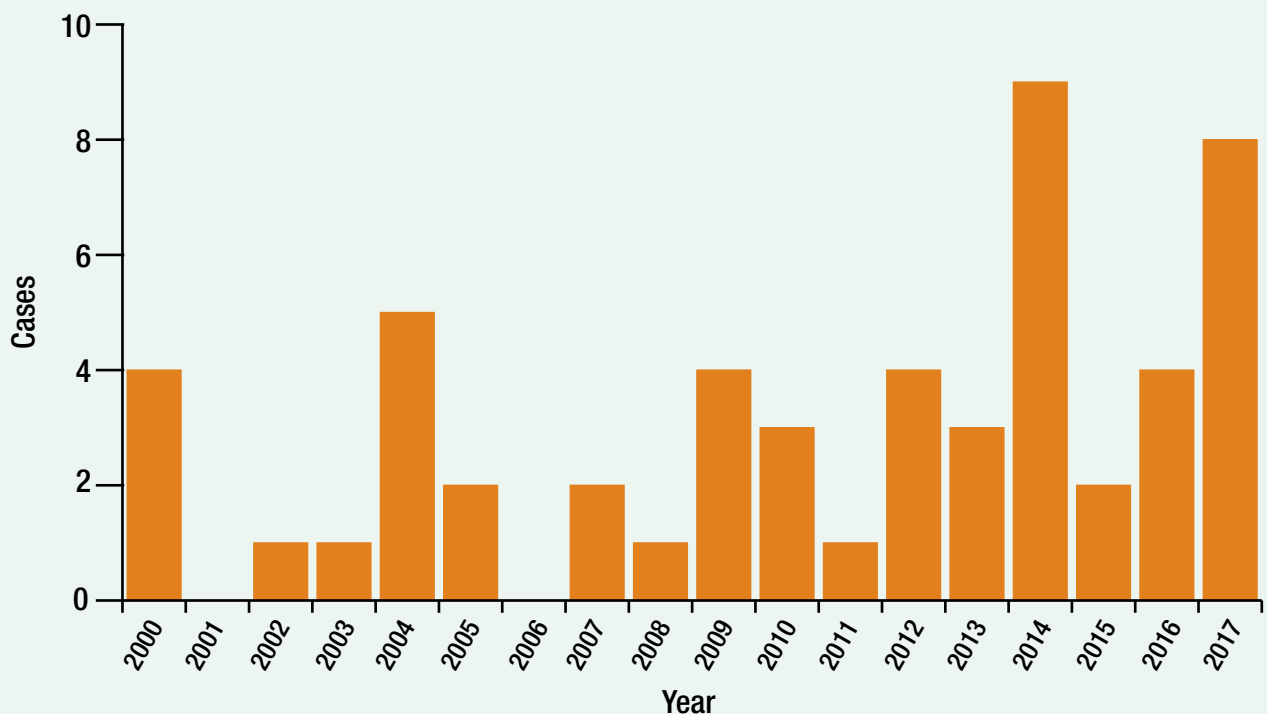


# Q fever

Q fever is a bacterial infection caused by *Coxiella burnetii*. It can result in acute or chronic illness in humans. It is usually acquired through inhalation of barnyard dust or aerosols contaminated with bacteria from the placentas, body fluids or excreta from infected animals. The bacteria can become airborne and travel for miles. The primary reservoirs are cattle, sheep and goats. Infection may also result from consumption of unpasteurized milk. Veterinarians and sheep, goat and dairy farmers are most at risk.

A host of symptoms can accompany acute Q fever; they include high fever, severe headache, malaise, myalgia, chills, sweats, nausea, vomiting, dry cough, diarrhea, abdominal pain and chest pain. Most people recover from acute Q fever, but some (<5%) develop chronic illness, which often manifests as endocarditis. People with valvular heart disease, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems are at risk for chronic Q fever after an acute infection. Chronic infection can be treated with long courses of antibiotics.

Q fever by year: Oregon, 2000–2017



Q fever reports are rare in Oregon. However, the number of cases doubled in 2017 to eight reported acute cases. Nationally, 193 cases were reported in 2017, the highest ever documented. The Pacific Northwest had the highest regional count.

## Prevention

- Barns and laboratories housing potentially infected animals should have restricted access, and holding facilities for sheep should be located away from populated areas.
- Appropriately dispose of placenta, birth products, fetal membranes and aborted fetuses at facilities housing sheep and goats.
- Use only pasteurized milk and milk products.