



Speech by

Hon. WENDY EDMOND

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard 5 August 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cutaneous Anthrax

Hon. W. M. EDMOND (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: Queensland Health is investigating a case of cutaneous anthrax in a young adult male. I stress that the case shows no identifiable link to animals. The young male labourer was admitted to the Princess Alexandra Hospital on 18 July 1998 with the diagnosis of cellulitis. On 28 July, the Brisbane Southside Public Health Unit was notified of the diagnosis of cutaneous anthrax, or skin anthrax. The patient has not been exposed to animals. Other sources, such as exposure to cotton bales, fertiliser, Rugby football and home environments are being investigated.

Single sporadic cases of the infection occur from time to time, and cutaneous anthrax is the most common form of the infection. It usually enters the body through a small cut or scratch, and is readily treated when detected early. It is extremely rare for humans to be infected by cutaneous anthrax. In fact, this is the first case to be notified in Queensland in more than 50 years. It cannot be transmitted from human to human, and Queensland Health assesses no risk to the public. Anthrax occurs worldwide, commonly in animals such as sheep, goats and cattle. Officers of the Division of Workplace Health and Safety, DPI and Queensland Health are investigating the source of the infection. Anthrax spores are highly resistant to heat and desiccation, so it is often very difficult to trace the source of infection for sporadic cases such as this. The spores can live in the ground for many, many years. In the meantime, the young man is being treated at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and is doing well. I repeat: there is no evidence of risk to the public or livestock from this isolated case.
