

Society Should Not Panic Due to Anthrax Case

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Recently, residents of Yogyakarta have been worried due to the case of anthrax that was found in the village of Purwosari, Kulon Progo regency, that caused deaths in several cattle. The disease is suspected to have contracted to dozens of residents.

Head of a team to respond to anthrax case from Faculty of Medicine Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), dr. Riris Andono Ahmad, MPH., Ph.D., called on the people not to panic but to remain alerted. The disease that is a caused by *Bacillus anthracis* that infects humans can be treated medically.

“Anthrax in humans can be treated with appropriate treatment,” she said in a press conference at Fortakgama UGM room on Saturday (21/1).

The disease cannot be transmitted between humans. Transmission of the bacteria happens when there is contact between humans and anthrax infected animals. Transmission of anthrax can happen due to direct or indirect contact with animals, carcass, or animal products that are infected by anthrax.



“The disease attacks the skin, digestion tract, and respiration tract. People who died of anthrax are because the bacteria have gone to the respiratory tract and other organs,” she said.

To prevent people from getting transmitted, Riris emphasised on the need to have a clean and healthy life style. If consuming meat, people are suggested to buy it from certified slaughter house and the meat is cooked up to 120° C or well done.

UGM microbiologist, dr. Abu Tholib, M.Sc., Ph.D., mentioned that the 99 percent of anthrax cases around the world affect the skin, only 1 percent affects the lungs and other organs that may be fatal. “As high as 99% of cases cause skin disorders but these can be treated well,” he said.

Dr. Abu Tholib said the symptoms of anthrax includes blisters. If the case already systemic, someone would experience nausea and fever. “Humans that are infected by anthrax can be treated with antibiotics which are effective enough,” he said.


Head of Veterinary Health Department of Faculty of Veterinary Sciences UGM, dr. Heru Susetya MP.,Ph.D., said the society need not worry to consume meat. The meat is safe to consume as long as it does not show anthrax symptoms, which in animals come in the form of high fever, pain in the waist, sudden death with blood coming out of the body. “Please report immediately to the Veterinary Health Stations if finding these symptoms,” he said.

Heru urged the people not to cull and consume infected cattle. The safe meat has fresh red colour whilst not having bad smells. “Infected animals have to be eliminated soon, not being culled as the bacteria that have contact with the air will form spores that can transmit anywhere,” he said.

Cattle Mitigation

To improve the safety of cattle to be consumed, Dean of Faculty of Animal Sciences UGM, Prof.Dr. Ali Agus, suggested people to increase animal trade mitigation by engaging the veterinary health stations for transporting the animals. “Transports of cattle in endemic areas have to be cut off so that anthrax bacteria would not spread to other areas,” he said.

Other ways are to monitor cattle mobilisations because these would make the disease move elsewhere, too. If there is a case in one area, the transports of animals need to be cut off there.



“In order to prevent the spread of bacteria, disinfection is required for an area that is already contaminated. The animals in the proximity need also to be vaccinated and cured,” he said.

The dead animals need to be buried soon, while the things that are contaminated or had contact with the infected animal have to be eradicated, too.

“But, importantly, people should not panic, please keep calm and do mitigation against anthrax,” he concluded.

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