

Anthrax is Relatively Easy to Handle

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The recent anthrax case found in Kulonprogo has actually been localised and resolved due to rapid handling by related agencies. But the spread of wrong information on the case in social media has worried people.

“The anthrax case has been localised, actually, in one location. It’s been resolved. So now the problem is not the disease, but the hoax,” said researcher of veterinary health of Faculty of Veterinary Sciences UGM, Dr. drh. Widagdo Sri Nugroho, M.P., in a Workshop held between Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Faculty of Animal Sciences in the R. Soepardjo auditorium, Faculty of Animal Sciences UGM on Wednesday (25/1).

Widagdo said anthrax is actually found in almost all countries. Of 180 states that join veterinary health organisations, anthrax is found in 94 percent of states. In 22 provinces in Indonesia anthrax is endemic. “In Indonesia it was identified since 1884 in Teluk Betung, Lampung. Presently, 22 provinces are endemic. The ones yet to report are Aceh, Riau, Bangka Belitung, North Maluku, Maluku, Papua and West Papua,” he said.

According to Widagdo while the *Bacillus anthracis* bacteria are not exposed to the air, the bacteria are relatively easy to handle. He added the emergence of anthrax in Indonesia can always be resolved, because anthrax is not directly transmitted from animal to human. “Not from animal, but

from contaminated sources entering the human body," he said.

In his opinion, the re-emergence of anthrax in one area is because the spores of bacteria can live in the soil for tens of years. During wet season with humidity above 95 percent, the spores of bacteria will be reactivated and transfer to plants eaten by animals or other contaminated sources.

Widagdo suggested farmers to be aware of their cattle that have indications of transmitting anthrax. Farmers are suggested to contact veterinarians to examine the condition of the cattle. The infected cattle ought to be not slaughtered or sold. "If you found an animal that is sick with anthrax, never slaughter or cull them, even necropsy is not allowed. The infected animal has to be burned, not buried, because the spores of bacteria can live again," he said.

Animal having anthrax, according to Widagdo, generally died suddenly due to bleeding in the brains and fever while the animal looks restless. In cows, there is inflammation in the neck and chest and dark thin blood dripping from the nose. Animal with anthrax can be cured with antibiotics. "After getting medication, vaccination is given to vulnerable animals. Sanitation is done by giving disinfectant," he said.

Microbiologist from UGM, dr. Abu Thalib aman, M.Sc., Ph.D., said the transmission of anthrax from animal to human is by contact through open wounds, inhalation, and contaminated food that is consumed. But it is not easy for anthrax to infect human because it needs more than 10 thousand spores of anthrax to get into the human body, which can actually be controlled by human antibody anyway," he said.

Researcher from veterinary agency in Wates, Kulon Progo, Dr. Indarto Sudarsono, said it was not easy for them to examine the animal or product of infected animal because the anthrax bacteria get easily killed if contaminated by other bacteria. They are also very sensitive to antibiotics and can be eliminated with disinfectant.

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