Anthrax disease

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`In news`

Two elephants died of Anthrax disease in Assam, following the two deaths the forest department has launched a vaccination drive and is trying to trace the source of the infection

What is Anthrax disease?

- It is a highly infectious zoonotic disease found primarily in herbivorous animals(could be transferred from animals to humans)
- Anthrax also called Malignant pustule, Malignant oedema, Woolsorter's disease, or Ragpicker's disease
- It is caused by Bacillus anthracis, a rod-shaped spore-forming bacteria and can spread from animal to animal through contaminated soil and feed
- The disease naturally occurs among herbivorous animals through contaminated soil and feed; among omnivorous and carnivorous animals through contaminated meat, bone meals or other feeds; and among wild animals from feeding on anthrax infected carcasses.
- It commonly affects domestic and wild animals around the world.
- It can occur in four forms: skin, lungs, intestinal, and injection
- Anthrax exists in many parts of the world, including Asia, southern Europe, sub-Sahelian Africa and parts of Australia.

How does it affect animals?

Domestic and wild animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, antelope, and deer can become infected when they breathe in or ingest spores in contaminated soil, plants, or water.

Does it infect human beings?

- People get infected with anthrax when spores get into the body. When anthrax spores get inside the body, they can be "activated."
- When they become active, the bacteria can multiply, spread out in the body, produce toxins (poisons), and cause severe illness.
- This can happen when people breathe in spores, eat food or drink water that is contaminated with spores, or get spores in a cut or scrape in the skin.

Anthrax in India

- Anthrax is enzootic (normally present in an area in animals) in southern India but is less frequent to absent in the northern Indian States.
- Elephants have been known to die of anthrax in the north-east.
- In the past years the anthrax cases have been reported from Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Karnataka.