

1.3. Systematics of Biological Warfare Agents

Biological warfare agents and bio-weapons

According to a United Nations definition, biological warfare agents are "...living organisms of all kinds or infectious agents derived from these organisms, that shall cause disease or death of humans, animals or plants and whose effect is due to their ability to proliferate in the attacked persons, animals or plants."

Although the WHO classifies various pathogens as potential biological warfare agents, the so-called "Dirty Dozen", a summary of the most important possible pathogens that distinguishes bacteria, viruses and toxins, has become a common term.

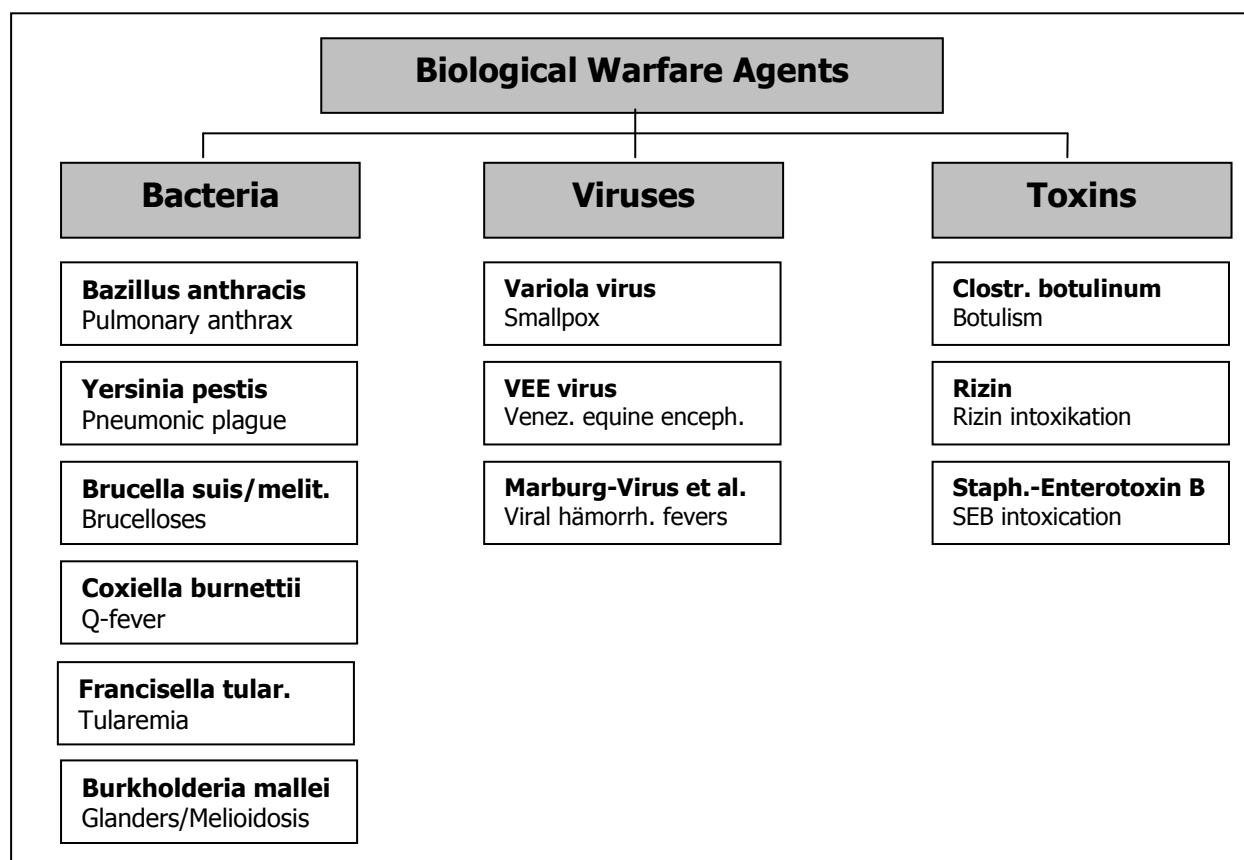


Table 1.3.1: Biological warfare agents: "The Dirty Dozen"

Biological weapons (synonymous: biological warfare) consist of a biological warfare agent and an applicator. Apart from the usual military weapons such as bomblets, missiles and mines these may be spraying, aerolization and dispersing devices. Other types of warfare such as sabotage, poisoning of portable water sources or spreading in air conditioning systems of large buildings may also be applied.