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Death in a Small Package: A Short History of Anthrax (Johns Hopkins Biographies of Disease)

Susan D. Jones

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A disease of soil, animals, and people, anthrax has threatened lives for at least two thousand years. Farmers have long recognized its lasting virulence, but in our time, anthrax has been associated with terrorism and warfare. What accounts for this frightening transformation? *Death in a Small Package* recounts how this ubiquitous agricultural disease came to be one of the deadliest and most feared biological weapons in the world.

Bacillus anthracis is lethal. Animals killed by the disease are buried deep underground, where anthrax spores remain viable for decades or even centuries and, if accidentally disturbed, can cause new infections. But anthrax can be deliberately aerosolized and used to kill?as it was in the United States in 2001.

Historian and veterinarian Susan D. Jones recounts the life story of anthrax through the biology of the bacillus; the political, economic, geographic, and scientific factors that affect anthrax prevalance; and the cultural beliefs about the disease that have shaped human responses to it. She explains how *Bacillus anthracis* became domesticated, discusses what researchers have learned from numerous outbreaks, and analyzes how the bacillus came to be weaponized and what this development means for the modern world.

Jones compellingly narrates the biography of this frightfully hardy disease from the ancient world through the present day.

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