Part 5 of 5

Summary
Microorganisms and toxins that could act as biological weapons are naturally occurring and can replicate.

Biological exposure routes can be air, water or food.

There are many characteristics which make specific microorganisms more appealing for use as a bioterrorism weapon including morbidity, mortality, availability, propagation, stability, dispersion.
The CDC has classified bioterrorism microbial agents into categories A, B and C based on:
- Ease of transmission
- Severity of morbidity and mortality
- Likelihood of use

Most food and waterborne agents are classified as category B.
Two key features of microbial agents with respect to food and water dispersion are the:

- Size of the microorganism
- Resistance to environmental degradation and chemical inactivation

Food and waterborne microbes have specific characteristics such as low inoculation dose, ease of secondary transmission and moderate to high persistence in the environment that facilitate their potential use as bioterrorism agents.