

# BIOLOGICAL AGENTS

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Biological agents are microscopic living organisms that can cause death or incapacitation to humans, plants, and animals. Biological agents are classified into five categories: bacteria, viruses, rickettsiae, fungi, and toxins.

## USE AS BIOLOGICAL WEAPON

There are millions of biological agents but only a few have been identified as usable for military-grade biological weapons, for example:

**Anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*):** microbe discovered by Robert Koch in 1876. A small dose can cause a public health crisis.



**Plague (*Yersinia pestis*):** bacteria that causes pneumonic, septicemic and bubonic plague.



**Smallpox (*Variola major*):** eradicated in 1980, this virus is highly contagious through the air and can survive explosions.



**Tularemia (*Francisella tularensis*):** this virus can be dispersed through the air. It is resistant to cold temperatures and can live in water, damp soil, hay and straw. It is highly contagious.

