

What about Testing my Animals for MRSA?

Consult your veterinarian about whether there is a need to have screening tests run on your animals to determine if they are MRSA carriers.

What about Treating MRSA Infections in Animals?

If a MRSA infection is diagnosed in your animal, your veterinarian will work with you on setting up the proper treatment for your animal. Animals colonized with MRSA (carriers) can often clear the bacteria from their systems without treatment.

Having MRSA Doesn't Mean You Must Give Up Your Animals!

If you have MRSA or are undergoing treatment for MRSA, you do not need to give up your animals. Pets are an important part of many people's everyday lives and offer many health benefits to their people. In some cases of recurring infections of MRSA in people, it has been found helpful to temporarily have a MRSA-carrying pet isolated away from the MRSA-infected owner to help ensure a long-term solution to the problem.

Resources:

<https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/MRSA-FAQs.aspx>

http://www.avmamedia.org/display.asp?sid=152&NAME=MRSA_and_Pets

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5317/VTMD-9133.pdf>

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To be the preeminent authority on veterinary medicine and animal well-being in Vermont

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MRSA in Animals: A One Health Approach

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MRSA in Animals



MRSA is an infection caused by bacteria called staph. Although MRSA has received more attention as a disease of people, it can also affect animals. Many staph bacteria are common on human and animal skin, as well as in the mouth and nose or inside the gut. Much of the time, these bacteria are not harmful. Sometimes, however, when the bacteria get inside the skin (either through a cut, a scrape, or through a surgery site) they can make people or animals sick. If the bacteria do not respond to antibiotic treatment, the infections can be very serious and even life-threatening. MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that has become resistant to antibiotic treatment and can cause serious infections. MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant Staph aureus, which describes the type of staph bacteria and the group of antibiotics it is resistant to.

What does MRSA Look Like in Animals?

As in people, MRSA most commonly causes skin infections or infections following surgery. MRSA is not the leading cause of skin infections in most animals because there are other staph bacteria that are better suited to animals.

What Animals Get Infected with MRSA?

It is possible for a variety of animals to be infected with MRSA, including dogs, cats, horses, and cows.

Where Does MRSA in Animals Come From?

MRSA in animals often comes from humans. Once animals have MRSA, however, they can give it back to humans or spread it to other animals. MRSA can also be spread from either people or animals to surfaces in the household, and these household surfaces can later serve as sources of reinfection for both people and animals.

What is a MRSA Carrier?

As well as causing infections that can make people sick, MRSA can live in the bodies of some people (and animals) without causing any signs of sickness. These people (and animals) are said to be MRSA carriers. Sometimes people (or animals) are referred to as being “colonized” by MRSA, which means the same as being a carrier.

What Animals Can Carry MRSA?

Many types of animals have been found to carry MRSA, especially in the homes of people who have MRSA. Dogs, cats, small pets, and birds have all been found to carry MRSA. Horses, pigs, and other livestock can also carry MRSA, although in these cases the type of MRSA, known as the strain, may be different from the strains more commonly found in people. These strains of MRSA can still be spread between animals and people. Researchers think it likely that MRSA will be found in more animals as the disease continues to be studied.

Should I Worry about MRSA in my Animals?

If you are being decolonized or treated for MRSA infection, you should also take precautions to prevent spread of the bacteria between you and your animals.

- Wash your hands **before and after** touching your animals.
- Do not touch your nose or face after touching your animal until you have thoroughly washed your hands.
- Wash your pet’s toys and bedding regularly.
- Do not allow your pet to sleep in or on your bed as long as you have MRSA.
- Discourage your pet from licking you, especially near your face.
- Consider having your pet examined by your veterinarian to be sure their skin is healthy: skin disease can be difficult to detect under fur!



Possible points of spread of MRSA in a household

Reprinted from The Lancet, Vol. 12 # 9, M Davis et. al, Household transmission of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and other staphylococci, p706., Copyright 2012, with permission from Elsevier

