



MRSA Infection in Pets & Your Health

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a bacteria that can affect humans and animals. MRSA is caused by a bacterium that has become resistant to almost all antibiotics. Approximately 25 to 30 percent of humans have regular *S. aureus* on their skin, but only one to two percent carry MRSA. Rarely, pets can get MRSA infections from people who have MRSA, animals who have MRSA, or objects in their environments that have been contaminated with MRSA.



Wear disposable gloves when changing bandages to protect yourself and your pet.

Disease Highlights:

- **Transmission:** MRSA is spread through contact with infected wounds or contaminated objects (such as bandages, towels or bedding).
- **Risk to Humans:** People at highest risk of getting ill are persons who are hospitalized, have recently had surgery, or have weakened immune systems due to disease or medication. Athletes and military recruits are at higher risk of being exposed to MRSA.
- **Signs in Humans:** Skin infections usually begin as a pimple or a boil and may become red, swollen, warm, painful, and full of pus. Sometimes these wounds are confused with spider bites.

If your pet is diagnosed with MRSA, reduce your risk of becoming ill by following these recommendations:

- Do not touch infected wounds and contaminated materials such as bandages and towels, especially if you have a skin injury (such as a cut or scrape).
- Wear rubber gloves when bathing your pet, and when cleaning and treating wounds. Keep your pet's wound covered with a clean dry bandage until it is completely healed.
- Don't share items such as towels, bedding, and dishes with infected animals or humans.
- Disinfect contaminated hard surfaces and items with a household cleaner that has a label that says it will kill MRSA. You can also use a 1:100 fresh dilution of bleach (add 2 tablespoons of bleach to 1 quart of cool water). Let stand for 10 minutes before wiping the surface clean. Disinfecting with bleach may discolor carpet and fabrics.
- Wash contaminated clothing, towels, and bedding with the hottest laundry setting the fabric can withstand. Remember to wear rubber gloves when handling potentially contaminated items.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds after activities such as handling infected animals, changing bandages, and cleaning food or water bowls.
- Don't allow your pet to lick your face or any of your own wounds.
- Follow your veterinarian's advice regarding your pet's care and give your pet all of its medicine.

If your pet has been diagnosed with MRSA and you think you may have an infected wound, notify your health care provider and monitor yourself for symptoms.

For More Information Visit:

IDPH CADE Disease Information at www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/default.aspx?group=3
CFSPH Animal Disease Information at www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/fastfacts.php
CDC Healthy Pets Healthy People at www.cdc.gov/healthypets/