**What are methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* species?**

Methicillin-resistant *staphylococcal* species are increasing in frequency and are a common cause of bacterial skin infections in companion animals. These bacteria are resistant to antibiotic methicillin and other types of antibiotics. Some resistant *Staphylococcus* bacteria may include *Staphylococcus intermedius*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *Staphylococcus schleiferi*. *Staphylococcal* species are commonly found as normal skin flora of animals and humans and many are not resistant.

**Are methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* a health risk for me, my family, or my pet?**

Methicillin-resistant *staphylococci* usually do not cause illness in healthy people or animals.

**How are methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* transmitted to people and animals?**

Direct skin-to-skin contact is a common route of transmission, but methicillin-resistant *staphylococcal* species can also be transmitted by contaminated objects such as bandages, environmental surfaces, hands, or bites.

**What are the symptoms of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* infections in animals?**

The most common symptoms are skin infections (such as boils or abscesses), ear infections, and wounds. Humans can get similar types of infections.

**Can a pet or person have a methicillin-resistant *staphylococcal* infection and not be sick?**

Yes, sometimes people and pets can carry these bacteria on their skin or in their nose and have no outward signs of illness. This is often called colonization.

**How are methicillin-resistant *staphylococcal* infections diagnosed?**

A swab taken from the affected area on your pet is submitted to a laboratory for bacterial culture. Often, the when the bacteria is tested it is isolated against a number of antibiotics. We are looking for antibiotics that will work against a particular bacteria (i.e. antibiotic sensitivity).

**How are these infections treated and for how long?**

Antibiotics may be prescribed by your veterinarian. The length of treatment may vary so please consult with your veterinarian. If infections persist this may be a sign of a resistant infection. With persistent infections, your veterinarian may want to culture the wound.

**Is the risk of contamination to people or other animals still present if the infection is resolved?**

The risk is greatly reduced once the infection has resolved.

**If my pet has a methicillin-resistant *staphylococcal* infection, what can I do to avoid getting infected?**

Remember your risk is minimal and hand washing is a key way to prevent transferring the resistant bacteria.

**Other suggestions:**

1. Follow all care instructions from your veterinarian.
2. Avoid situations that allow for bacteria to be easily transferred, such as direct contact with affected wounds, nose-to-nose and mouth-to-mouth contact while your animal is contagious.
3. Practice good hygiene. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the infected animal’s bandage or cleaning.touching an infected area.
4. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered when in contact with your pet. Wear disposable gloves when cleaning infected ears, skin or wounds and if possible, when touching items such as the animal’s bedding, bandages or any other objects that may have been in contact with the infected area.
5. Clean washable items that become soiled with hot water and laundry detergent (use bleach if
possible. Drying laundry in a dryer also helps to kill bacteria.

6. Use a household disinfectant or bleach solution to clean any surfaces contaminated by wounds or drainage.
   - To make bleach solution, mix 2 teaspoons bleach into one quart of water.
   - Be sure to make a new bleach solution every day.
   - Never mix bleach with other cleaners, especially ammonia.

7. If anyone in your home has recently had surgery or is immuno-compromised, he/she should avoid direct contact with the infected pet, the pet’s infected area/wound and any contaminated items such as bandage materials.

Additional Information:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Minnesota Department of Health

This fact sheet is meant to provide basic information. For specific health concerns please contact your physician or veterinarian. Updated 2008.