

A Pet's Bite Can Pass on MRSA

By Robert Preidt

HealthDay

MONDAY, June 22 (HealthDay News)—Transmission of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) infections between pets and humans are increasing, with the most common being infections of the skin, soft-tissue and surgical infections, say researchers who conducted a review of clinical evidence.

"Pet owners are often unaware of the potential for transmission of life-threatening pathogens from their canine and feline companions," Dr. Richard Oehler, of the University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa, and colleagues wrote in the July issue of *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

Dog and cat bites account for about 1 percent of emergency department visits each year in the United States and Europe. Severe infections occur in about 20 percent of all cases and are caused by bacteria from the animal's mouth, plus possibly other bacteria from the human patient's skin, the study authors pointed out.

Sepsis, a bloodstream infection, can be a severe complication of bite wounds infected with MRSA and a number of other types of bacteria, noted Oehler and colleagues.

Increasing prevalence of community-acquired MRSA in humans has been accompanied by MRSA colonization in domestic animals such as dogs, cats and horses. This makes the animals potential reservoirs of MRSA infection. And MRSA-related skin infections in pets, such as simple dermatitis, can easily spread to humans, according to the article.

Treatment of MRSA infections in pets is similar to that used in humans, said the researchers, who added that much more research needs to be done on MRSA pet-human infections.

"Bite injuries are a major cause of injury in the USA and Europe each year, particularly in children. Bites to the hands, forearms, neck and head have the potential for the highest morbidity," the study authors conclude. "Health-care providers are at the forefront of protecting the vital relationships between people and their pets. Clinicians must continue to promote loving pet ownership, take an adequate pet history, and be aware that associated diseases are preventable via recognition, education, and simple precautions."

The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has more about [MRSA](#).

More from MSN Health & Fitness on Dog Bites and Vaccines:

- [The Most Important Vaccines of Our Time](#)
- [Beware of Dog Bites](#)
- [Animal and Human Bites](#)
- [Search: Vaccination News](#)

Copyright © 2009 ScoutNews, LLC. All rights reserved.

URL: <http://health.msn.com/health-topics/vaccinations/articlepage.aspx?cp-documentid=100240768>1=31049>