



# Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* Information for Horse Owners



## What is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*?

- *Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacteria commonly found on the skin and in the nose of people, horses and cattle.
- MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- Isolating MRSA in a horse has public health implications because MRSA infections are challenging to treat in animals and people.

## Where did my horse get MRSA?

- MRSA can be spread from a person or horse that is sick (infected) or a healthy MRSA carrier (colonized).
- Your horse might have already been carrying MRSA without showing illness, then incurred an injury that became infected.
- MRSA is typically spread through touching (skin, nose, mouth, wounds) but can be spread by contaminated hands, surfaces, or equipment in the barn.

## Can MRSA spread to my other horses and family?

- The risk for healthy horses and people to contract MRSA from an infected horse is low. However, transmission of MRSA from one colonized horse to another has been seen.
- Immunosuppressed family members should avoid contact with MRSA-infected horses during treatment.
- Everyone can reduce spread by washing hands.
- Anyone concerned about MRSA exposure or illness should contact their healthcare provider.

## How can we treat my horse?

- There is **NO** benefit to screening healthy horses or treating horses who are colonized with MRSA but not showing clinical signs.
- Infected horses are treated with antibiotics and by fixing underlying conditions (e.g., remove implants).
- Most MRSA infections can be treated successfully even though they are resistant to many antibiotics.
- Follow your veterinarian's guidance exactly for antibiotic treatment and follow-up care.

## General precautions

- Keep your horse at home during treatment, away from other people and horses.
- If possible, keep the infected area covered with a bandage.
- Wear gloves to change the bandage and avoid touching the infected skin. Don't let other animals have contact with the infected skin.
- Wash hands before and after contact with your horse.

## Where can I find more information?

- Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory  
(785) 532-5650 <http://www.ksvdl.org/>
- MU Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory  
(573) 882-8367 <https://vmdl.missouri.edu/>
- CDC Information about MRSA  
<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/index.html>
- CDC MRSA Cleaning and Disinfection  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/community/environment/index.html>

**KANSAS STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

College of Veterinary Medicine

 College of  
Veterinary Medicine  
University of Missouri

This flier was originally developed by researchers at the Colleges of Veterinary Medicine at Kansas State University and the University of Missouri, and is funded in part by FDA Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network (U18FD006990).