



# 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.
- 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?

- Infected horses are treated with antibiotics.
- Your veterinarian might also try to remove sources of infection (e.g. 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.
- Horses who are colonized with MRSA without showing signs of illness do not need to be treated.

## 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 Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory  
(785) 532-5650 <http://www.ksvdl.org/>
- MU Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory  
(573) 882-8367 <https://vmdl.missouri.edu/>
- [CDC MRSA Basics](#)

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University of Missouri

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