

## Further information on LA-MRSA

Infections caused by LA-MRSA are similar to those caused by (non-resistant) *Staphylococcus aureus*, but if treatment is required there may be fewer antibiotics that are effective.

LA-MRSA is different from other types of MRSA, such as hospital or community associated strains, which are more frequently found in humans. It does not pass as easily from person to person. However, it has been found that people who live with LA-MRSA positive livestock workers can become colonised too.

Anyone who has contact with colonised livestock can become colonised, but it is more likely in people who have regular contact with colonised animals.

Colonisation can be lost over time. Evidence suggests people in contact with colonised animals for a short period of time tend to be LA-MRSA free after about three days. People who are regularly in contact with colonised animals may take longer to become LA-MRSA free, but the exact length of time is not known. Further contact can lead to re-colonisation.

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# LA-MRSA: Information for people who work with livestock

## What is LA-MRSA?

- Livestock associated Meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (LA-MRSA) is a specific type of bacteria, that has developed resistance to certain antibiotics.
- It has been identified in livestock in various countries throughout the world and has recently been reported in a small number of animals in the UK.
- It can pass between animals and humans in either direction, most often without causing any problems, but occasionally it can cause infections. Infections from this are very rare in people in the UK.
- It usually lives in the nose or on the skin without causing any signs or symptoms. In this instance people and animals are said to be **colonised**.
- If it is able to get into the body e.g. via a wound, it can cause a local skin **infection**, usually resulting in boils or wound infections, but occasionally it can cause disease such as pneumonia or a blood stream infection.
- It can spread from animals to people by direct contact or via dust in the environment of colonised animals. It can survive in dust for a long period of time.

## Steps you can take to reduce the chance of an LA-MRSA infection

Many of the already established recommendations for infection prevention on farm will help to limit infections from LA-MRSA. As it is not possible to tell if an animal is colonised, without carrying out specific laboratory tests, it is recommended that as a precaution, all people who work with livestock follow as many of the steps below as possible.



**Wash your hands regularly** with soap, remove all visible dirt and then dry your hands with a paper towel. This is especially important before eating, smoking and leaving the farm. Alcohol hand gels may be used, but are less effective if applied when hands are wet or visibly dirty.



**Cover any cuts, grazes or areas of broken skin** with a waterproof dressing to reduce the chance of bacteria entering the body.



**Wear protective outer clothing** when working with animals. Remove the protective clothing on the farm and if possible have a shower before leaving. Ideally changing rooms will be on the edge of the farm so you do not have to walk through the farm in your clean clothes.



**Wash all work clothes on farm.** If this is not possible, put the clothes in a sealed bag to take them home for washing. Avoid shaking out the clothes as you put them in the machine as this will spread dust in the environment. Wash work clothes separately from other laundry and wash your hands after handling them.



**Footwear should be dedicated to working with livestock and not used elsewhere.** Regularly clean and disinfect your footwear and change into other footwear when leaving the premises.



**Inform your doctor or dentist that you work with livestock** if you go to them for any treatment as they may wish to test for LA-MRSA before carrying out any surgery or dental extractions. It may also help them to accurately diagnose conditions such as skin infections. Members of your household should also let the doctor know that they have an indirect connection to livestock.

**Good on-farm biosecurity practices will help to reduce the spread of LA-MRSA, as well as other bacteria and viruses that can spread between livestock and people. Consult your veterinary surgeon for advice on biosecurity.**

You should consider this information as part of your COSHH [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002] assessment. More information on how to undertake a COSHH assessment and report an illness are available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>

Any infections attributable to occupational exposure should be reported to the Health & Safety Executive [HSE] under RIDDOR [Reporting of Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013] <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm>