



Helping pets suffering from MRSA

Honourary Patron - Claire Rayner

www.thebellamosfoundation.com

PRESS INFORMATION

Warning to pet owners and vets after first ever UK MRSA dog “Dies of human strain”

Web site reveals widespread global problem

The UK’s first recorded dog to die of MRSA had a human strain of the disease, it is revealed today.

In an alarming development for millions of pet owners, a leading independent microbiology laboratory told Jill Moss of Edgware, Middlesex, that 10-year-old Bella, her beautiful white Samoyed, must have become infected during surgery. Bella had contracted a particularly resistant strain and the surgeon “most probably was colonised and not wearing a mask”.

And the problem, far from being isolated, could be global. The website of the Bella Moss Foundation, Jill’s animal welfare charity dedicated to protecting companion animals from MRSA and other serious infections, has attracted a flood of case studies.

The Bella Moss Foundation is campaigning to change veterinary standards on infection control, and Jill plans a veterinary clinic specialising in the treatment of pets suffering serious infection.

Jill’s tireless website campaign has brought the issue to the fore in the veterinary world, and the British Veterinary Association, in response to the threat, has taken steps to warn its members. At present there are no statutory or enforceable regulations to which vets are accountable for their infection control practices.

Since www.pets-mrsa.com was launched, Jill has been inundated with requests for help from hundreds of owners of pets with MRSA from all over the world.

She continued: “We have found that this problem is widespread throughout the world, and we are determined to inform and warn pet owners and vets, and be a supportive but persistent voice calling for better infection prevention, to avoid it happening again. Post-operative infections are not simply bad luck, too often they reflect bad practice.”

Research by Professor David Lloyd in the Veterinary Dermatology Department at the Royal Veterinary College suggests MRSA infection in veterinary practice is on the rise. His research publishes 12 confirmed cases over a few months at the Queen Mother hospital in Potters Bar. He said: "We've surveyed the hospital and taken samples from animals and staff, and found that 20 per cent of staff were colonised. There is a potential to transfer the infection from humans to animals, and any animal being treated with antibiotics may be susceptible to MRSA.”

At least one instance of transmission of MRSA from a pet to its owner* has been documented, although the main route of transmission has so far been from human to animal, and a major laboratory has documented over 200 cases of MRSA in companion animals from around the UK**. The implication is that a greater potential for transmission in both directions now exists

Jill is appealing for funds to promote information on MRSA for vets and pet owners, sponsor conferences, produce publications, and develop a veterinary clinic specialising in the treatment of pets suffering serious infection.

Claire Rayner, Honorary Patron of PETS-MRSA.COM and The Bella Moss Foundation, said: “We as a society need to be concerned with animals contracting MRSA. It is a very worrying situation. More research needs to be done for the future.

“I am concerned about MRSA cross contamination from people to animals, and vets should be diligent about infection control. We should all be concerned with protecting pets from unnecessary suffering and death.”

Jill Moss added: “Unless important changes take place in the way veterinary practices perform surgery and take better care of postoperative infections, the levels of MRSA in animals will rise. At present we really have no clear idea of how MRSA moves through the pet population, nor how it might affect humans, and this is the reason we desperately need more research. In the meantime, it is absolutely crucial that vets take this risk seriously; what happened to Bella shouldn't happen to a dog.”

* *Asymptomatic Nasal Carriage of Mupirocin-Resistant, Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in a Pet Dog Associated with MRSA Infection in Household Contacts* **Farrin A. Manian** Division of Infectious Diseases, St. John's Mercy Medical Centre St. Louis Missouri Received 29 May 2002; accepted 5 August 2002; electronically published 6 January 2003.

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