

IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE ON ANTIBIOTIC USE

Antibiotics should only be used when absolutely necessary.
Always administer the full course of antibiotics as prescribed.
Never change or stop a course of antibiotics without
veterinary advice.
Never use antibiotics prescribed for humans on
animals unless under veterinary guidance.

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DON'T PANIC, PREVENTION IS EASY WHEN YOU KNOW HOW

Here are the most important steps to protect your pets
at home:

Practice good hand hygiene (and get the others in your
household to do so also!)

- Always use warm water and soap, or on clean dry hands
a squirt of sanitiser.
- Ensure that you rub the soap or sanitiser all over your
hands: palms, backs of hands, both wrists, between
your fingers, your nails and fingers, and don't forget
your thumbs!
- Rinse and dry your hands or rub in the sanitiser until dry.

If your pet has to undergo surgery

- Talk to your vet about their infection control policy.
(If you are unhappy with a vet's decision to prescribe
broad-spectrum antibiotics - get a second opinion.)

Be aware that repeated infections may be a sign of
resistant bacteria or an underlying disease

- This may need referral to a specialist for diagnosis
and treatment.

MOST IMPORTANTLY... SPREAD THE WORD!

Educate your friends and family, to protect their pets, by
showing them this leaflet. If you are unhappy with a vet's
decision to prescribe broad-spectrum antibiotics - get a
second opinion.

An information leaflet for pet owners

HELP KEEP YOUR PET HEALTHY



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KEEP YOUR PET HEALTHY

A healthy pet has a stronger immune system, and so is better at fighting off infection.

Regular vaccinations and health checks should be carried out by your vet as this is an opportunity to boost your pet's immune system and get your pet looked over.

Preventative healthcare such as the avoidance of parasites (fleas and worms) is important as they can affect the immune system and the pet's ability to fight off infections.

Your pet's diet is important because good nutrition leads to good health. Feed your animal high quality pet food, and make sure they always have water available.

Your pet's food and water bowls should be made of stainless steel, earthenware or glass, rather than plastic, aluminium or leaded china, to avoid any chemicals leaching into the contents.

A healthy lifestyle is also important. Pets need to exercise everyday – dogs need walks and cats need to play.

Your family home should be warm, but well ventilated with fresh air. It is best if pets are not exposed to cigarette smoke, 'air fresheners', or other indoor chemicals such as cleaning products.

As difficult as it may be if you love your pet, it is best to minimise face-to-face contact.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ANIMALS CAN SUFFER FROM MRSA AND OTHER MULTIPLE BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

THE FACTS ABOUT MRSA

You have probably heard of the hospital 'Superbug' MRSA. However, MRSA is only one of a number of bacteria that have evolved to be resistant to many different antibiotics. It is not just humans that can get infected by these resistant bacteria; animals, including your pets, can be at risk too.

MRSA and other antibiotic-resistant infections can be very serious and even fatal. Early detection can save lives – but, as with all disease problems, prevention is better. Please see the back of this leaflet to find the easy steps you can take to protect yourself, your family and your pets.

MRSA stands for *Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus*. Other multiple-drug resistant (MDR) bacteria include *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus pseudintermedius* (MRSP), *meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus schleferi* (MRSS), and extended spectrum beta-lactamase *Escherichia coli* (ESBL-E. coli).

These bacteria, and their non-resistant forms, can be carried by humans or animals on the skin, in the nose, or in the gut, all without causing harm. They only become a problem under circumstances that predispose to infection.

The outward signs of an antibiotic-resistant infection are the same as those for most other infections: inflammation, raised temperature around the area, and sometimes the production of pus.

The only way to find out what the infection is caused by is to take a sample for cytology and culture.

A culture can confirm the infection, identify the bacteria, and find out which antibiotics will or won't kill the bacteria. It is very important to identify the bacteria involved, and how they can be treated, because otherwise it is likely that an ineffective antibiotic treatment will be used. This could seriously worsen the infection.



Before

After

Jazz (7 year female) is now well after suffering from a MRSA infection.



Always ask your vet to take swabs or a urine sample before prescribing broad spectrum antibiotics.

MRSA and other bacteria are mostly spread by direct contact, but can also be spread by air currents or by sneezes or coughs.

They move from the environment to people, from person to person, person to animal, or animal to person or environment – this is why cleanliness is important.

Pets can become carriers through the close physical contact they have with people who are themselves carriers.

Surgical sites, cuts or grazes can become infected by bacteria falling from the skin into the wound, from contaminated hands or instruments, or by droplets from an uncovered mouth or nose.

A small proportion of the human population carry MRSA without knowing it and without any ill-effects.

Those who work in health settings, including vets and veterinary practice staff, may have a higher risk of carrying MRSA than the general population.

A small proportion of the general pet population carry MRSA or similar MDR bacteria, but the carriage rate in sick animals that have visited veterinary practices is higher.

Sick, very old and very young animals are those that are most at risk.

MRSA and other MDR bacteria are not just a problem in the UK, it is a global issue.