



Guidance on livestock MRSA on mink farms

MRSA can be transmitted from animals to humans

Livestock MRSA (MRSA 398) is a resistant staphylococcus bacterium found on some mink farms, which can be transmitted from animals to humans being in contact with the animals. MRSA can also be transmitted from human to human. Therefore, precautions should be taken to minimise the risk of carrying the infection from the mink farm to the household. In case of infection to humans in the household, the Danish Health and Medicines Authority's regulations must be followed.

MRSA on mink farms

There is the risk that MRSA will be in the mink feed. MRSA is then disseminated to the animals, into the pens and possibly to surfaces and in the air. Therefore, you risk coming into contact with MRSA when being on a mink farm. If you follow the recommendations "Before you leave the farm" and always use gloves when handling feed and animals and when cleaning the feed silo, you can minimise the risk of being contaminated with MRSA and thereby the risk of carrying MRSA to areas outside the farm is reduced.

Before you leave the farm - also during breaks

- Clean boots!
- Take your working clothes off!
- Wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap!
- Dry your hands in paper towel!
- When your hands are completely dry, disinfect your hands with alcohol added glycerol and rub for at least 30 seconds to kill MRSA 398!
- Always take a shower on the farm before going home!
- Change into clean clothes, kept separate from the working clothes so they do not get "contaminated" by MRSA!
- Avoid bringing things in and out of the farm. Mobile phones are typically brought in and out of the farm, but try to limit this as much as possible. When bringing them in and out, mobile phones must be in a protective cover and disinfected before bringing them out!
- Take a shower before going home or as the very first thing when you are at home!

Washing of working clothes

- Wash clothes at a minimum of 60 degrees in the working area.
- Clothes washed elsewhere must be transported in sealed bags.
- Do not mix with other clothes.
- Use hand disinfection immediately after you have touched the working clothes.

WHAT ARE STAPHYLOCOCCI?

Staphylococci (Staphylococcus aureus) are bacteria that are common among human beings, some animals and in our environment.

A healthy person carrying staphylococci has little risk of getting sick, but the bacteria can cause troublesome infections such as abscesses and impetigo.

With sick and weak persons staphylococci sometimes cause serious illness such as wound infection or septicaemia. Staphylococci infect usually by close contact with people who carry staphylococci or by touching things contaminated by staphylococci (e.g. door handle and mobile phone).

WHAT IS MRSA?

MRSA (Methicillin Resistente Staphylococcus Aureus) is staph bacteria that are resistant to common staphylococcal penicillin.

MRSA produces the same kind of infection as non-resistant staphylococci, described above, but if you are infected you must be treated with special antibiotics. There are many different types of MRSA, and one of the types is MRSA 398.

WHAT IS MRSA 398?

Livestock MRSA (MRSA 398) is a special type of resistant staphylococci found in domestic animals which can be transmitted from animals to humans. If you work on a mink farm with MRSA you have, therefore, the risk of carrying/being infected with MRSA. MRSA can be infectious from human to human. Infections with MRSA 398 should be treated with special antibiotics and therefore it is important to get examined if you are infected.

MRSA looks like the other types of MRSA in several ways:

- Most people infected carry the bacteria, but are not sick.
- Gives the same types of infection - often abscesses and impetigo.
- Rarely causes serious illness with otherwise healthy human beings.
- Is transmitted in the same way, that means primarily through close and repeated contact with animals or human beings carrying MRSA.



The requirements of the Danish Working Environment Authority

- Inform employees about the specific infection risks that may be associated with the work.
- Instruct on cleaning the pens, behaviour when leaving the area and washing of working clothes.
- It is the employer's responsibility to ensure washing of working clothes.
- If the work is very dusty or is developing aerosols, you must use filtering facepiece respirators.
- Ensure that, beyond the normal risk assessment (in Danish called APV), a biological APV is prepared which describes the specific infection risks of working in infected stock and how to prevent infection with MRSA in and outside the mink farm.

At regular contact with MRSA

For daily or regular contact with mink you will be exposed to MRSA again and again.

Therefore, you generally only undergo treatment to remove the bacteria if you completely stop working on mink farms.

If household members, who do not regularly come on the mink farm, are tested positive, it is recommended that they undergo a treatment to get rid of the bacteria because there is little risk of being infected again.

When pregnant

No increased risk of complications of pregnancy or risk to the fetus in pregnant women carrying the MRSA has been described.

In this connection it should be noticed that 20-30% of all people are carriers of *Staphylococcus aureus*. This does not result in granting prevention with regard to pregnancy or childbirth. However, it is recommended that pregnant women, who are constantly exposed to MRSA, are examined four weeks before childbirth for the purpose of a treatment as a possible carrier and at the same time stop working with live mink, mink feed and coming on the mink farm.

When contacting a doctor/hospital

If you need a doctor/hospital, it is important to inform them that you are working on a mink farm and can be a carrier of MRSA. In this way you get the right treatment and the health staff can prevent any further infection.

Further information

The Danish Working Environment Authority stipulates the above for employers and also recommends that you follow the Danish Health and Medicines Authority's guidelines. See more on the Danish Health and Medicines Authority's website on: MRSA, Guidelines on preventing the spread of MRSA.

These guidelines on MRSA on mink farms have been developed by the Agricultural Council for Safety and Health at Work in collaboration with Copenhagen Fur. The guidelines are designed to be pinned on mink farms. They can be obtained at: BAR Farm to Fork and Danish Agriculture and Food Council. The guidelines can also be downloaded from www.barjordtilbord.dk, www.lf.dk, <http://vsp.lf.dk> og www.kopenhagenfur.com.

Any questions, please contact the Agricultural Council for Safety and Health at Work's Secretariat: +45 8740 3400 or barjordtilbord@glssa.dk.

The Danish Working Environment Authority has viewed the guidelines and finds that the contents comply with the Working Environment Act. The Danish Working Environment Authority has solely assessed the guidelines as they are and has not considered whether it covers all relevant topics within the area in question. In addition, specifications are subject to technological change.

The Danish Health and Medicines Authority and SSI have had the guidelines for consultation.

