

Testing for MRSA

- Information for workers

What is MRSA?

MRSA is bacteria that have developed resistance to antibiotics. MRSA can spread from humans to animals and from animals to humans. People can carry MRSA on the skin, in the throat and nose. In contaminated swineherds, the bacteria can be found in the dust, on surfaces and in the air.

Why is testing important?

In Norway, the authorities (NFSA - Norwegian Food Safety Authority) regularly samples pigs to detect herds that have MRSA bacteria. When the bacteria are detected, the authorities implement measures to eradicate the bacteria. The animals are slaughtered and the piggeries are cleaned and disinfected. MRSA is common in swine productions in numerous countries.

MRSA is usually not dangerous to humans or animals. If the bacteria spread to vulnerable people like in hospitals, it can be challenging to treat seriously ill people. This is why it is important to keep the level of MRSA at as low as possible. To achieve this, it is important that everyone who works in Norwegian swine production, and have contact with swine production abroad gets tested for MRSA.

How does the testing happen?

- After contact with swine herds in other countries it is important that you get tested for MRSA before you have contact with Norwegian pigs.
- Consult a physician in the vicinity. Public health services in Norway shall perform the testing.
- It's quick and painless to take the test. You receive results after about one week.
- Until the results are ready, you must follow biosecurity procedures: shower and wash your hair thoroughly. Disinfect hands for each visit in the herd. Use headgear, disposable gloves and masks when working in the herd.

What happens if the test is positive for MRSA?

- Anyone diagnosed with MRSA are offered treatment, free of charge.
- The treatment takes one week, control samples will be performed one, two and three weeks after the treatment.
- People who carry MRSA can have normal contact with other people, children can go to kindergarten and school as usual.

Protection against communicable diseases

- Follow the biosecurity procedures both when you go into the herd and when you leave it.
- Shower if possible.
- Change clothes and footwear.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry them with paper.
- After contact with pigs in other countries a minimum of 48 hours must pass before you can have contact with Norwegian pigs. At least 24 of these 48 hours should be spent in Norway.

Use of antibiotics

- Any use of antibiotics in humans and animals can lead to a development of resistant bacteria.
- Only physicians can prescribe antibiotics for humans.

Routines when visiting swine herds in other countries

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Wear disposable gloves, headgear and a dust mask with valve (protects humans against infection from animals).
- Hands should be washed and disinfected immediately after the protective devices are removed.
- If possible, take a shower immediately after visiting the herd.