Streptococcosis

What is streptococcosis and what causes it?

Streptococcosis is a general name for a variety of diseases caused by a group of bacteria called **Streptococcus** (strep-TOE-coccus). Some "strep" organisms normally live on the body of humans or animals and do not cause disease. Others may cause disease (sometimes severe) in both people and animals.

What animals can get streptococcosis?

The animals most commonly affected with streptococcosis are horses, guinea pigs, swine, dogs, cats, and fish. Less frequently disease can occur in monkeys, cattle, sheep, goats, ferrets, poultry.

How can my animal get streptococcosis?

Streptococcus bacteria are common on the bodies of animals along with numerous other types of bacteria, as part of the normal flora. When the bacteria enter cuts, abrasions, other wounds or when the immune system becomes weakened, disease may occur. The bacteria can be spread between animals by **direct contact, aerosol, fomites** and sometimes ingestion (**oral**).

How does streptococcosis affect my animal?

There are many different species and strains of *Streptococcus*, so a wide range of disease signs may be seen. Infection can be mild to severly fatal. "Strep" bacteria can cause wound infections, abscesses, respiratory infection, and other illness. In horses, signs of disease may include runny nose, coughing, breeding problems, abortion, or mastitis. In swine, infection can cause swollen joints, fever,

incoordination, blindness, and convulsions and death. In dogs and cats, skin, wound or joint infections, pneumonia, or mastitis may bee seen.

Occasionally, "strep" causes a severe and fatal condition called toxic shock syndrome. It has a quick, progressive onset; most affected animals will die. Signs may include coughing, vomiting, extreme weakness, stiffness, muscle tremors, seizures, intense pain, and possibly bleeding from the nose or bloody diarrhea.

Can I get streptococcosis?

Yes. People can get streptococcosis; the majority of infections occur from exposure to other people infected with *Streptococcus* bacteria or from "strep" organisms entering through wounds (**direct contact**), **aerosol**, or sometimes by ingestion (**oral**). Getting "strep" infections from animals are very rare.

"Strep throat" is common in children. Symptoms include sore throat, painful swallowing, headache, high fever, nausea, vomiting, and runny nose. If a rash is present, the disease is called scarlet fever.

Streptococcosis
is a disease caused by a group of bacteria commonly found on the skin of humans and animals.

Streptococcosis can also cause infections throughout the body (e.g., skin, heart, joints, lungs). Less commonly it can lead to severe and even fatal disease such as toxic shock syndrome.

Who should I contact, if I suspect streptococcosis?

In Animals –
Contact your veterinarian.
In Humans –
Contact your physician.

How can I protect my animal from streptococcosis?

Since "strep" organisms are normally found on animals, it is difficult to prevent infections. Reducing stress, cleaning wounds, and practicing good hygiene will help minimize disease. Prevent exposure of animals to those known to be infected with *Streptococcus* bacteria.

How can I protect myself from streptococcosis?

Practice good hand washing, especially after coughing and sneezing and before preparing foods or eating. Clean any wounds thouroughly with soap and water. If signs of wound infection (e.g., redness, swelling, drainage, pain, fever) occur, seek medical care. Avoid people or animals known to have "strep". When working with animals, wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly afterwards.

For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Streptococcosis at http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/default.htm

CDC website. Streptococcosis at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_streptococcus.htm

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