



Frequently Asked Questions about Streptococcus Equi Subsp Zooepidemicus

What is Streptococcus Equi Subsp Zooepidemicus?

Streptococcus Equi Subsp Zooepidemicus, also known as Strep zoo is a bacteria that is commonly found in horses, cattle, and pigs and rarely causes disease in these animals. Because it is zoonotic, it can be transmitted between animals species and humans. When it affects dogs, it is highly contagious and can cause severe respiratory disease. It is a relatively new pathogen present in animal shelters and there are still many things we do not know about this bacteria.

How is it transmitted?

Strep zoo is transmitted primarily by direct contact, contact with contaminated fomites and by inhalation. It can also be spread during the sanitation process and survives in wet environments. There are currently no studies to tell us how long Strep zoo survives in the environment or on fomites. Due to shelter overcrowding and stress in shelters, confirmed cases have been discovered across the country.

Can Strep zoo be treated?

Because it is a bacteria it can be treated with antibiotics. However, it is resistant to doxycycline, which is the common antibiotic we use to treat other respiratory diseases in the shelter. If you believe your pet is experiencing symptoms, just like with any other health concern for your pet, it is highly recommended that you consult with your veterinarian.

What do clinical signs of Strep zoo look like?

The initial signs are similar to other respiratory or “kennel cough” disease we see commonly in the shelter such as coughing, sneezing, and nasal discharge. Other signs such as depression or lethargy and vomiting may also be present. Most cases with Strep zoo rapidly decline with severe clinical signs and can pass away within 24-48 hours. Hemorrhage (bleeding) from the mouth and nose are common signs of severe disease in patients. In some cases, especially when coupled with other bacteria and viruses, it can be deadly to dogs.

How is it diagnosed?

Swabs can be collected from the nose or oral cavity and sent to a lab for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing or bacterial culture to diagnose Strep zoo. Animal tissue samples can also be sent to laboratories for results.

Who is experiencing confirmed cases of Strep zoo?

The animal care facilities across the county have confirmed cases of Strep zoo. It has been referred to as the “mystery dog illness”. Overcrowding and stress has greatly impacted the large spread of the bacterium.



Can Strep zoo be eliminated from its environment?

Yes, the use of disinfectants such as Rescue combined with the sanitation protocols can rid Strep zoo. At this time, we do not have studies to tell us how long the bacteria can survive in the environment. However, wet environments favor survival.

Are there vaccines that prevent Strep zoo?

No, there are no vaccines for Strep zoo available at this time.

After being at the Care Center are my animals at home at risk of contracting Strep zoo?

Although unlikely, there is potential that you could bring it home to your pets. Steps can be taken to reduce the risk. Since there is no vaccine to prevent disease, the best way to protect your animals is to take measures to not take it home on your clothes and shoes. Consider changing clothes and shoes and washing your hands before heading home or before interacting with your animals.

Can Strep zoo cause sickness in humans? Is it zoonotic?

Human infections with Strep zoo is very rare and associated with other underlying diseases or immunosuppression. When handling exposed or Strep zoo positive dogs, personal protective equipment (PPE) such as but not limited to, shoe covers, gowns, masks, and gloves should be worn to reduce the risk of spread to humans and other dogs.

Is Strep zoo the same as “Strep throat” to humans?

Strep throat in humans is caused by a different Streptococcus bacteria called Streptococcus pyogenes. It is not related to Strep zoo we see in dogs.