



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Feb. 4, 2008

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THREE WILD ANIMAL PARK EMPLOYEES HAVE STAPH INFECTION *Threat to Public Minimal; Health and Human Services Agency Continues Investigation*

The County of San Diego HHS (Health and Human Services Agency) is working closely with the San Diego Wild Animal Park to investigate three confirmed cases of MRSA (methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus*), a type of staph infection that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Three employees have been diagnosed with MRSA; three additional cases are pending.

“The Wild Animal Park is cooperating with Public Health Services on the investigation, and on instituting infection-control measures,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer.

HHS Public Health nurses met today with Wild Animal Park employees to discuss infection control measures. The area of the park where employees are believed to have contracted the infection is not accessible to the public.

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections. Most staph and MRSA infections are treatable with antibiotics. Approximately one in 100 people carries MRSA without becoming sick.

Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States and are a common cause of pneumonia, surgical wound infections, and bloodstream infections. Staph bacteria are commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Most staph skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics (also known as antimicrobials or antibacterials).

Practicing good hygiene can help prevent MRSA:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages, and avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

For more information on MRSA and prevention of MRSA, contact HHS Community Epidemiology at (619) 515-6620.

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Editor’s Note: Dr. Wilma Wooten will be available for interviews until 6:30 p.m. tonight (Monday, Feb. 4) and between 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday, Feb. 5).