



**INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY**
PRESS RELEASE

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About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

Antibiotic-resistant MRSA bacteria widely present in retail pork, new study says

MINNEAPOLIS – New peer-reviewed research published January 19 found methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in retail pork samples collected from retail stores at a higher rate than previously identified. The study by researchers from the University of Iowa College of Public Health and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, titled “MRSA in conventional and alternative retail pork products,” represents the largest sampling of raw meat products for MRSA contamination to date in the United States. It appears in the online science journal PLoS ONE from the Public Library of Science.

In total, 395 pork samples were collected from a total of 36 stores in Iowa, Minnesota, and New Jersey. Among these samples, *S. aureus*—a bacteria that can cause serious human infections of the bloodstream, skin, lungs (pneumonia) and other organs—was isolated from 256 samples (64.8 percent) and of those, 26 pork samples (6.6 percent of the total) were found to contain MRSA.

MRSA is one of the most serious bacteria, causing infections resistant to multiple antibiotics, which are therefore costly and very difficult to treat. According to 2005 estimates, MRSA accounts for about 280,000 infections and nearly 19,000 deaths a year in hospitals. However, MRSA infections acquired outside of hospitals, in communities and on farms, have been rapidly rising.

“The latest results are more than double the prevalence found in previous studies of this kind. At 6.6 percent, pork is four times more likely to be carrying deadly MRSA than the average American, pointing to our food system and industrial farming as an avenue for MRSA to continue to spread,” said IATP’s David Wallinga, MD.

Read the study on the Public Library of Science’s PLoS ONE website at <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0030092>.

IATP has been working for over a decade to eliminate the overuse of antibiotics in animal feed and prevent the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria like MRSA on farms and in our food supply. IATP’s David Wallinga, MD will also be presenting “Raising Pigs, Raising Problems: Saying No to Antibiotics in Animal Feed” at TEDx in Manhattan January 20.

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