**One Health News Bits**

**April 23, 2011**

[**Study finds staph in half of meat and poultry**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSekBXzCwNBZcbunCicOlzCicNFpWi?format=standard)

Researchers recently found that 47% of beef, chicken, pork and turkey they purchased at grocery stores in five U.S. markets were contaminated with Staphylococcus aureus bacteria, a finding that raises questions about the use of antibiotics in animal feed and the role it plays in promoting drug-resistant bacteria that can infect humans. The American Meat Institute took issue with the study, saying the sample of 136 packages of meat was too small to be statistically significant and added that the contamination could have come from human handlers. See AVMA's[issues page](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSekBXzCwNBZcbumCicOlzCicNtxJF) for more on antimicrobial use.

[**New generation of rat poisons has ripple effect in wildlife**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSekBXzCwNBZcbuzCicOlzCicNKjEJ?format=standard)

A potent new generation of rat poisons used by California's residents and businesses are killing not only the rodents they're aimed at but also a growing number of the bobcats, barn owls, kestrels and other wildlife that feed on the mice, rats and squirrels. "Rodenticides are the new DDT. It is an emergency, an environmental disaster. We are killing nature's own rodent control," said Maggie Sergio, director of advocacy at WildCare, a Bay Area wildlife rehabilitation center that has responded to dozens of poisoning cases

[**Rabies is on the rise in parts of Colorado, officials warn**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSiqBXzCwNBZcSznCicOlzCicNbySE?format=standard)

Rabies is on the rise in parts of Colorado and health officials think the worst is yet to come. So far, eight animals have tested positive--mostly skunks--and concern is mounting as they move into residential neighborhoods. In the past six months, seven skunks have tested positive for rabies in Pueblo County numbers like this are unprecedented in the county's history. "We're very concerned," said Carlton.

[**Growing pet rat trend puts children at risk, doctors say**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSiqBXzCwNBZcSzqCicOlzCicNCISr?format=standard)

Popular children's books such as "Harry Potter" and films such as "Ratatouille" have sparked a growing demand for pet rats, but doctors say the trend puts more children at risk of developing rat bite fever, a disease that can be contracted through casual contact and carries a mortality rate of up to 10% without treatment. However, veterinarian Scott Weese thinks education on zoonotic disease transmission, good hygiene and proper handling of animals would be more effective than a ban on rats as pets.

[**Treat pets for fleas to decrease plague risk**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSiqBXzCwNBZcSzrCicOlzCicNOBeU?format=standard)

Fleas carried the bubonic plague that sickened three pets in New Mexico recently, a disease that killed millions in Europe during the 1300s but today can usually be cured with antibiotics. In New Mexico, which typically sees the largest number of plague cases in animals, veterinarians advise pet owners to treat their animals for fleas regularly to cut down on the risk of infection.

[**Veterinarian weighs in on the raw-foods debate**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSiqBXzCwNBZcSzxCicOlzCicNSvMp?format=standard)

Proponents of [raw pet food focus](http://www2.starexponent.com/topics/types/industryterm/tags/raw-pet-food-focus/) on the high quality, fresh ingredients used in the [food](http://www2.starexponent.com/topics/types/industryterm/tags/food/). They also generally reflect on the “natural” diet of wolves and other wild animals that do not cook their meals. Sometimes mention is made of enzymes in [raw food](http://www2.starexponent.com/topics/types/industryterm/tags/raw-food/) that are lost through the cooking process. There is little doubt that most of these diets are adequate to prevent [nutritional deficiencies](http://www2.starexponent.com/topics/types/medicalcondition/tags/nutritional-deficiencies/). However, there is considerable doubt about whether these diets represent optimum nutrition. In addition, there is serious concern about the safety of these diets.

[**Officials: North Pacific fish unlikely to be affected by radiation from Japan reactor**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSiqBXzCwNBZcSzyCicOlzCicNXpuQ?format=standard)

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — North Pacific fish are so unlikely to be contaminated by radioactive material from the crippled nuclear plant in Japan that there's no reason to test them, according to federal and state of Alaska health officials. Dangerous levels of radiation have been reported off the coast from the Fukushima reactor complex. However, a spokeswoman for the federal Food and Drug Administration told the Anchorage Daily News that the ocean is so huge, and Alaska fisheries so far away, that there is no realistic threat.

[**Deer mice study offers new clues to Hantavirus**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSljBXzCwNBZdpjvCicOlzCicNuZju?format=standard)

Three environmental factors -- rainfall, predator diversity, and island size and shape -- account for different rates of Hantavirus infection in the deer mouse populations on eight islands off the coast of California, researchers found. The findings support the growing consensus among public health experts that ecological factors play an important role in the incidence and prevalence of zoonotic diseases that can affect human health, said Alan Tessier of the National Science Foundation's Division of Environmental Biology.

[**USDA awards $1.6 million for food safety research**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSljBXzCwNBZdpjyCicOlzCicNwPow?format=standard)

A new research program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service will be based at Kansas State University and will focus on ensuring that food served to children at schools and child care centers is safe. The USDA is providing a $1.6 million grant for the Center of Excellence for Food Safety Research in Child Nutrition Programs’ first two years of operation in Manhattan, Kan.

[**U.S. Senate approves Food Safety Accountability Act**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSljBXzCwNBZdpjKCicOlzCicNExUz?format=standard)

A bill that would allow for felony charges to be brought against firms that consciously go against food-safety rules such as distributing misbranded or contaminated products has cleared the U.S. Senate and will go to the House for further review. The measure, called Food Safety Accountability Act, would allow for a maximum 10-year prison term on violators

[**Study: Dogs and humans share a common tumor marker**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSosBXzCwNBZdLuTCicOlzCicNuYwG?format=standard)

Austrian researchers studying breast cancer in humans and dogs have found that a tumor marker called the carcinoembryonic antigen receptor is essentially the same in both species. The researchers hope to use the finding to develop new therapeutic procedures that can be applied to both humans and dogs.

[**Researchers receive federal grant to create new vaccine for Junin virus**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSosBXzCwNBZdLuUCicOlzCicNCHcJ?format=standard)

Researchers with the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., and the University of Texas Medical Branch are collaborating to develop a safer vaccine against Junin virus, a fatal hemorrhagic fever pathogen that can be passed on to humans through the urine of rodents, which are immune to the virus. The researchers will use $4.8 million in grant funding from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

[**White-nose syndrome identified at W.Va. national park**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSosBXzCwNBZdLuWCicOlzCicNWiwt?format=standard)

GLEN JEAN, W.Va. -- Scientists have confirmed the presence of deadly white-nose syndrome among bats at the New River Gorge National River, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said today. Biologist Mark Graham saw little brown bats flying out of abandoned mine portals in the Fayette County Park in the middle of the day this past winter.

[**Marine-life concerns linger a year after Gulf oil spill**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSriBXzCwNBZeegLCicOlzCicNFwBF?format=standard)

One year after the BP oil spill, scientists responding to an Associated Press survey gave the Gulf of Mexico an ecological health grade of 68 on average, which is close to the grade of 78 given by the same scientists prior to the spill, but scientists still worry about long-term effects. The bodies of more than 220 sea turtles and 175 dolphins have washed up on gulf beaches since Jan. 1, although it's not yet clear how many were oil-spill casualties, and scientists are concerned about the dramatic declines in oyster and dolphin populations, sea floor erosion and other key health indicators.

[**Wisconsin wildlife health center plays key role in identifying animal diseases**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSriBXzCwNBZeegQCicOlzCicNdQKM?format=standard)

In a basement laboratory, Carol Meteyer places a dead tri-colored bat on an elevated table. Covered in protective gear, she resembles a surgeon calculating where to make the first cut. Meteyer, a wildlife pathologist, is responsible for performing a necropsy — an autopsy for animals. Working with an assistant, she carefully slices paper-thin pieces from the bat's wing for testing.

[**Study: 11 genes help malaria parasites to resist drugs**](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/cSriBXzCwNBZeegRCicOlzCicNmTZx?format=standard)

A team at Harvard University and the Broad Institute in Boston used advanced gene-hunting technology to search the genetic code of the malaria parasite Plasmodium falciparum. They found 10 previously undiscovered genes that help the mosquito-borne parasite quickly develop resistance to malaria treatments and confirmed the role of another.