

ARE DOGS A SOURCE OF STREPTOCOCCI IN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES?

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Pyogenic streptococci are bacteria that can cause a wide range of diseases from self limiting skin conditions (impetigo) to invasive infections (bacteraemia) and auto-immune sequelae such as acute rheumatic fever and post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis, all of which are over-represented in Aboriginal Australian communities. *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* subsp. *equisimilis* (SDSE) also known as group G and C streptococci are opportunistic pathogens but current research suggests that they are increasing in virulence. Pharyngeal swabs of humans and dogs in a north Queensland Aboriginal community revealed that SDSE was found in both humans and dogs. Further investigations using current genetic identification techniques revealed that most strains of SDSE isolated from dogs were diverged from human strains. However, some dogs carried 'human' strains. The impacts of these findings on the virulence of SDSE and their relevance at a community level are discussed. Recommendations for further studies into canine zoonoses in Aboriginal Australian communities are also described.