MRSA Infection at the Zoo Case Study

Over the past severalyears, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) has become infamous as the cause of skin infections among football players, wrestlers, fencers, and other athletes who share equipment or engage in contact sports. MRSA strains are resistant to many drugs, including methicillin, a penicillin derivative commonly used to treat staphylococcal infections. Clinicians now distinguish between HA (hospital acquired) MRSA and CA (community-acquired) MRSA. Spread of the bacterium from the initial infection site can lead to serious (often fatal) involvement of the heart, lungs, and bones.

Humans are not the only victims of MRSA. On January 29, 2008, the San Diego Zoo reported a MRSA outbreak involving a newborn African elephant and three of its human caretakers. The humans exhibited cutaneous pustules that were laboratory confirmed as MRSA infection. An investigation was initiated to determine the course and scope of the outbreak.

* Was this an instance of HA-MRSA or CA-MRSA?
* How is *S. aureus* commonly spread?