Effects of control measures on the spread of LA-MRSA among Danish pig herds between 2006 and 2015 – a simulation study

There has been a rapid increase in Danish pig herds testing positive for livestock-associated Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (LA-MRSA) since the first screening in 2008. Despite a national action plan to control LA-MRSA in the Danish pig population, 88% of pig herds tested positive in a 2016 cross-sectional study of 57 herds. The national action plan was initiated in April 2015 and aimed to reduce the spread of LA-MRSA among pig herds. However, its success is uncertain. We used a simulation model mimicking the spread of LA-MRSA among pig herds between 2006 and 2015 to evaluate the impact of control strategies if these had been implemented in 2007 or 2010. The strategies were combinations of the following control measures: (1) a reduced number of herds using high-risk antibiotics, (2) a reduced probability of indirect transmission among herds via humans, (3) movement restrictions, and (4) voluntary eradication in 5–7.5% of the herds. Almost all tested control strategies simulated a reduction in the spread of LA-MRSA. The combination of two, three or four intervention strategies showed additive effects and led to larger reductions in the predicted herd prevalence. In addition, the prevalence of LA-MRSA-positive herds at the time when control measures were initiated influenced the effects of the control strategies. Combining the simulated control measures can be considered in future action plans to control LA-MRSA.

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