

## Therapy Dogs May Spread Germs as Well as Love

### **Study shows that some canines carry bacteria when they visit hospitals.**

Some therapy dogs carry bacteria that could spread to human patients, possibly causing infections or other illnesses, according to preliminary research results at the University of Guelph in Canada.

Out of 102 dogs enrolled in a hospital therapy program in 2004, five percent carried bacteria such as salmonella and clostridium difficile, the Guelph Mercury reported.

The research is part of a study to determine if therapy dogs inadvertently pass on pathogens while they cheer up hospital patients.

Nobodys ever looked to see if dogs are a potential risk for patients, said researcher Sandra Lefebvre They might be spreading the love, but they might also be spreading something else.

The study is ongoing, with over 170 dogs currently being studied to determine if they are the source of the bacteria or if the dogs are picking it up when they visit hospitals, the newspaper said.

Researchers expect that the results will be used to help medical centers develop policies about how therapy dogs are used.

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