

Life-threatening bacteria thrives in pets' water bowls, experts discover

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Aisling Carroll and her dog Heidi at Hartpury. Credit: Hartpury University

Dogs' water bowls are a breeding ground for dangerous germs that could put animal and human health at risk, a new study at Hartpury University has revealed.

Potentially fatal [bacteria](#), including E.coli, salmonella and MRSA, which can all be transferred from pets to their owners, have been discovered in different types of dishes that are commonly sold across the UK.

Aisling Carroll from Hartpury, said: "It is clear from our study that dog [water](#) bowls pose a disease risk to both human and animal health."

In the first study of its kind, Animal Science Lecturer Aisling and BSc Bioveterinary Science graduate Coralie Wright investigated how much the build-up of bacteria could be affected by the material a bowl is made from and how often it is cleaned.

It revealed that dangerous bacteria was more likely to thrive in plastic and ceramic bowls than those made from [stainless steel](#).

"The increasingly close contact between humans and their pets is leading to concerns regarding bacterial transmission of zoonoses – infectious diseases that be transmitted between [animals](#) and humans," explained Aisling.

"The dog water bowl has previously been identified as the third most contaminated item within the household, which suggests that they are capable of disease transmission.

"The aim of our study was to identify whether the material – plastic, ceramic or stainless steel – and length of use of a dog's water bowl influences the quantity and species of bacteria present.

"Our research suggests the significant increase of bacteria found in dog

water bowls with length of use demonstrates the need for suitable cleaning regimes.

"We found the highest amount of bacteria in plastic bowls over time, but the most harmful bacterial species, including E.coli and MRSA, were most frequently identified in the ceramic bowls.

"While further research is required to assess the most suitable bowl materials and cleaning practices, it is clear from our study that dog water bowls pose a [disease risk](#) to both human and [animal health](#)."

This new study into dogs' water bowls is among a number taking place within the Animal Welfare Arena at Hartpury.

Provided by Hartpury University

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