

## Transcript

### 7 accidental discoveries that look like April Fool's Day headlines but aren't

#### Narrator:

Having been brought up on a farm in Scotland, scientist Alexander Fleming wasn't afraid of getting his hands dirty, examining nasty bacteria like staphylococcus aureus, which in humans as well as horses can cause death, as well as vomiting and boils.

One day in 1928, Fleming came back from his holidays. He found some cultures of the staphylococcus aureus bacteria which he'd meant to throw away had died. But instead of throwing them away, he stopped to think, what might have caused some of his sample to die and the rest to live? After a lot of time and effort in his lab, Fleming worked out that some of his sample had been contaminated by a particular fungus, which he then managed to grow himself.

As an ex soldier in World War I, he'd seen hundreds of soldiers die due to bacterial infection, and he figured that if the fungus could kill bacteria on his bench, it might also kill bacteria in wounded soldiers. And he was right. Having renamed his mould juice penicillin, it was ready for public consumption in time for the next war, on D-day. Penicillin has saved the lives of millions of people and horses. But due to overuse some bacteria is becoming resistant, and methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus is now widespread among humans. Known by its more popular name MRSA.

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