

Pheromone-inducible plasmid transfer is an important mechanism for dissemination of antibiotic resistance and virulence factors in these organisms. Plasmid-free strains of *Enterococcus faecalis* secrete at least half

a dozen peptide sex pheromone-probably many more-that induce a mating response by potential donor strains carrying members of specific families of conjugative plasmids. The response is associated with synthesis of surface proteins that facilitates formation of donor-recipient mating aggregates. When a recipient acquires a given plasmid , the corresponding pheromone becomes shutdown or masked.

Although

the structure of at least five of these peptides has been determined.