

Illnesses Caused by Non-Traditional Pets



Birds, reptiles, amphibians, rodents, ferrets, hedgehogs, and other non-traditional pets are popular in many households. However, these pets often carry *Salmonella*, a group of bacteria that can make people sick, in their feces. Children are especially at risk of illness caused by *Salmonella*.

Some pet birds may also carry bacteria that cause psittacosis (parrot fever).

To reduce your risk of illness

- Wash hands with soap and warm water after handling pets, and their bedding, food, cages or cage items.
- Individuals should not kiss pets or touch them to their face.
- Keep pets in their habitat or cage.
- Clean cages outdoors. Never clean cages or equipment in kitchen sinks or areas where food is prepared.



Reminder:
Children should always be supervised when handling pets.

Resources

Spokane Regional Health District Zoonotic Disease program

Disease information, including for bats and rabies; animal bite reporting; other resources
srhd.org/services/livingenv.asp

Healthy Pets Healthy People (CDC)

Disease information, specific groups and settings, health benefits of pets, pet disaster preparedness, and posters and fact sheets.

cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html

Spokane County Regional Animal Protection Services (SCRAPS)

Animal control, regulations, pet licenses, advice, lost pets & adoptions
spokanecounty.org/567/SCRAPS

509.477.2532

SpokAnimal

Advice, lost pets & adoptions
spokanimal.org
509.534.8133

Spokane Humane Society

Advice, lost pets & adoptions
spokanehumanesociety.org
509.467.5235

Dog Bite Prevention

cdc.gov/features/dog-bite-prevention/index.html



Zoonotic Disease Program

srhd.org/services/livingenv.asp
509.324.1560, ext. 7



DISEASES PEOPLE CAN GET FROM ANIMALS

Information for Pet Owners



Enjoying the Benefits of Pets

Many Spokane households know the joys that come with owning a dog or cat. There are many other types of pets kept here as well including chickens, reptiles, amphibians, birds, ferrets, hedgehogs, rodents, and even miniature goats.



The health benefits of pets to people are well known. Pets increase opportunities for exercise and socializing, and their companionship decreases loneliness and stress. Pets can be beneficial to children's growth and development. Owning a pet has even been shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

While the benefits are many, pets can inadvertently make people sick. It is important to take steps to reduce the risk of spreading diseases to humans that pets carry (zoonotic diseases), especially for people at higher risk for complications from these diseases. This brochure gives tips on preventing the spread of diseases pets may carry.

Tips for Dog and Cat Owners

- Follow a veterinarian's recommendations for internal parasite control and testing of pets. Parasites can be harmful to animals and may also infect people.
- Control fleas and ticks. They can also spread disease to people and are harmful to pets.
- Clean up pet feces every day to prevent spread of internal parasites.
- Get dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies by 4 months of age and keep up with booster doses of vaccine. It's the law.
- Learn about special precautions specific to a pet's raw meat diet or uncooked pet treats. These foods can cause illness in people.
- Keep pets away from wildlife that may spread diseases. People should also avoid all contact with wildlife.
- Socialize and train pets not to bite or scratch. Bites and scratches can cause serious skin infections.

Reminder

Take pets to the veterinarian at least yearly to maintain their good health.



Protecting People at Higher Risk of Illnesses Caused by Pets



Certain pets are more likely to spread diseases:

- Reptiles and amphibians like lizards, snakes, frogs and turtles
- Baby poultry (chicks & ducklings)
- Non-traditional pets like hedgehogs
- Sick animals, especially those with diarrhea



These pets should be avoided, especially by people with these conditions:

- organ transplant recipients
- people receiving cancer treatment or other medicines that suppress the immune system
- people with HIV
- adults age 65 and older
- pregnant women
- children under 5 years old

Pregnant women should avoid contact with rodents due to the risk of lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, a viral infectious disease that can harm an unborn baby.

If you or anyone in your family is at higher risk for illnesses spread by pets, talk to your doctor and veterinarian about precautions to take.

