

Guidelines for owners of birds, reptiles, rodents, and exotic pets

Birds, reptiles, rodents, and other exotic pets are popular in many households. However, these pets often carry *Salmonella* and other bacteria in their feces that can make people sick.

Some pet birds may also carry a germ that can cause psittacosis (parrot fever) in people.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after handling these pets, their bedding or food, and after touching cages.



- Don't nuzzle or kiss them.
- Keep them in their habitat or cage. Don't let them roam around.
- Never clean cages or equipment in the kitchen sink or where food is prepared. If you use a bathtub, disinfect it with bleach afterwards.



REMINDER!

Children should always be supervised when handling pets.

RESOURCES

Animal Care & Control - Regulations, advice, lost pets, adoptions & pet licenses

- Seattle: www.seattleanimalshelter.org
- King County: www.kingcounty.gov/safety/regionalAnimalServices/.aspx



Health benefits of pets

www.cdc.gov/healthypets/health_benefits.htm

Healthy Pets—Healthy People CDC website

www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.htm

List of zoonotic diseases associated with pets

www.cdc.gov/healthypets/browse_by_animal.htm

For pregnant women

www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pregnant.htm

www.cdc.gov/healthypets/lcmv_rodents.htm

Dog bite prevention

www.avma.org/animal_health/brochures/dog_bite/dog_bite_brochure.asp

Public Health
Seattle & King County



**Public Health - Seattle & King County
Environmental Health Services
Zoonotic Disease Program**

206-263-9566

www.kingcounty.gov/health/zoonotics

Available in Alternate Formats.

Zoonotic Diseases* Information for Pet Owners



***Diseases transmitted from
animals to people**

Staying healthy around pets



It's no secret that Americans love their pets. Most U.S. households have pets, and the

percent is increasing. In King County, 40% of households include a dog and even more have cats - for a total of over a half-million dogs and nearly 800,000 cats. Many other types of pets are kept as well, even chickens and mini goats in Seattle and many parts of the county.

The health benefits of pets are well known. Pets increase opportunities for exercise and socializing, and their companionship decreases feelings of loneliness. 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, it is also important to take precautions to reduce the risk of disease transmission from pets to people (zoonotic disease). This brochure will help people stay healthy around their pets.

PROTECTING PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK OF ZOOONOTIC DISEASE

Some people are more likely to get diseases from animals because of weaker immune systems, including:

- organ transplant recipients
- people on cancer treatment or other therapy that suppresses the immune system
- people with AIDS
- elderly people
- pregnant women
- children under 5 years old



If you or anyone in your family is at higher risk of zoonotic disease, talk to your doctor and veterinarian about precautions to take.

HIGH RISK PETS

People at higher risk should avoid:



- Reptiles & amphibians like lizards, snakes, frogs and turtles
- Baby chicks & ducklings
- Exotic pets like hedgehogs
- Sick animals, especially those with diarrhea

In addition, **pregnant women** should avoid hamsters and mice due to the risk of lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus (LCMV) infection that can harm the unborn baby.

Learn more at: www.pawssf.org

Tips for dog & cat owners

- Deworm puppies and kittens to eliminate internal parasites that are harmful to pets and may also infect people, especially children.
- Remove pet feces every day to prevent spread of parasites.
- Control fleas and ticks! They can spread disease to people and are harmful for your pet.
- Get dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies by 4 months of age and maintain boosters. It's the law in King County!
- Learn about special precautions if you feed raw meat diets or give uncooked pet treats; these can spread intestinal infections.
- Keep pets away from wildlife that may spread diseases.
- Reduce the risk of bites and scratches: socialize and train your pet to be a "good citizen".



REMINDER!

See your veterinarian regularly to maintain your pet's good health.