

# GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

## *To minimize the risk of zoonotic diseases*

This handout provides general precautions that can be used to prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases. Additional precautions should be taken by persons with weakened or compromised immune systems.

### **Hand Washing and Hygiene**

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of disease. Use warm water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds (sing 'Happy Birthday' or the 'A-B-C' song twice). Antimicrobial hand gels can be effective when hands are not visibly dirty.

- **Wash your hands often!!**
  - BEFORE—preparing food; eating; contact with infants or young children
  - AFTER—contact with pets or other animals; cleaning up pet waste or cages; using the restroom; blowing your nose; changing infant diapers
- **Supervise children to ensure proper hand washing**
- **Avoid direct contact with animal feces**
  - Wear gloves when gardening, cleaning up animal waste or changing litter boxes
  - Cover outdoor sandboxes when not in use
  - Keep litter boxes away from kitchen and eating areas
- **Clean and disinfect areas accessed by pets**
  - Change cat litter boxes daily; disinfect once a month
  - Remove pet waste in the yard or clean cages weekly
  - Clean bird cage linings daily—Wear gloves when handling items contaminated with bird droppings
  - Wear disposable gloves when cleaning animal cages or cleaning aquariums —Wash hands after finished

### **Personal Protection While Outdoors**

- **Avoid contact with wild animals or waterfowl**
  - Wildlife can be carriers of zoonotic diseases
  - Bats, skunks, foxes, and raccoons can be infected with rabies—If bitten, contact a physician immediately
  - If it is possible without further injury, capture the animal for testing
- **Avoid insect vectors (e.g., ticks and mosquitoes)**
  - Avoid wooded areas or peak vector activity times (e.g., dusk and dawn for mosquitoes)
  - Wear long sleeve shirts and long pants while outside
  - Use insect repellent containing DEET—  
NOTE: DEET should not be used on pets
- **Use vector control measures around your home**
  - Remove stagnant water sources to minimize mosquito breeding areas
  - Rodent proof your home, barn, and other buildings
  - Keep pet food in containers with tight lids

### **Food Safety**

- **Handle and prepare foods safely**
  - Do not eat raw or undercooked meat or eggs
  - Cook foods thoroughly until the internal temperature reaches 160°F
  - Wash raw fruits and vegetables before eating
  - Avoid raw milk or unpasteurized dairy products
  - Avoid cross contamination in the kitchen
    - Use separate cutting boards for meat items and fruits and vegetables
  - Store food promptly at the proper temperature
- **Promptly wash any kitchen utensils, or surfaces that have been in contact with raw meat or eggs**

### **Children and Animals**

Children, especially those 5 years old and younger, should always be supervised while interacting with animals. Do NOT let children :

- Put their hands or other objects (e.g., pacifiers) into their mouths after playing with animals or in animal areas
- Play roughly with pets -- to avoid bites and scratches
- Kiss pets or allow pets to lick the children's face

### **Pet Health**

- **Keeping pets healthy can minimize zoonotic diseases**
  - Have your pet checked bi-annually by a veterinarian
  - Keep vaccinations current, especially rabies
  - Have your pet checked regularly for parasites
  - Use a veterinarian recommended tick and flea prevention product
  - Pets with diarrhea should be examined by a veterinarian
- **Do not allow pets to interact with wildlife**
- **Do not allow your animal to eat other animal's feces**
- **Do not feed raw or undercooked meats to your pet—feed pets a high-quality commercial pet food**

### **For More Information**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Infectious Diseases. Healthy Pets Healthy People at [www.cdc.gov/healthypets/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/)

Pets are Wonderful Support (PAWS) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Safe Pet Guidelines at [www.pawss.org/graphics/education/safe\\_pet\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.pawss.org/graphics/education/safe_pet_guidelines.pdf)