

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

ZOONOTIC DISEASES OF COMPANION ANIMALS

This handout provides general precautions 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. Warm water and soap should be used for a minimum of 20 seconds (sing 'Happy Birthday' twice). Antimicrobial hand gels can be effective when hands are not visibly dirty.

- Wash your hands often!!
 - **BEFORE**—preparing food; eating; any 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, in cages or kennels weekly
 - Clean bird cage linings daily
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning animal cages or cleaning aquariums —Wash hands after finished

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 when they are around animals or 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 by a veterinarian twice a year
 - Keep vaccinations current, especially rabies
 - Use veterinarian recommended tick and flea prevention
 - Pets with diarrhea should be examined by a veterinarian
- Do not allow your animal to eat other animal's feces
- Do not feed raw or under cooked meats to your pet—feed pets a high-quality commercial pet food

Personal Protection While Outdoors

- Wildlife can be infected with zoonotic diseases
 - Avoid contact with wild animals or waterfowl or their feces
 - Bats, raccoons, skunks, and foxes can be infected with rabies—If bitten, contact a physician immediately
 - Do not allow pets to interact with wildlife
- Avoid insect vectors (e.g., ticks and mosquitoes)
 - Avoid wooded areas or peak vector activity times (e.g., dusk and dawn for mosquitoes)
 - Wear light-colored clothing and long sleeve shirts and long pants if visiting wooded areas
 - Use EPA-approved insect repellents (e.g., DEET or picaridin) — NOTE: DEET should not be used on pets
- Use vector control measures around your home
 - Remove stagnant water sources to minimize mosquito breeding areas

Food Safety

- Handle and prepare foods safely
 - Do not eat raw or under cooked meat or eggs
 - Cook foods, especially meats, thoroughly until the internal temperature reaches 165°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

For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Healthy Pets Healthy People
www.cdc.gov/healthypets/

Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

Safe Pet Guidelines
www.pawssf.org/graphics/education/safe_pet_guidelines.pdf