

DISEASE PREVENTION: ORAL TRANSMISSION



Oral transmission of diseases occurs when a disease pathogen is ingested. This can occur from consumption of contaminated food or water, fecal material from infected animals, or by licking or chewing contaminated items.

Several diseases common to shelters can be spread through the ingestion of disease pathogens. Examples include intestinal parasites (e.g., roundworms, hookworms), parvoviruses and *Campylobacter*.

Many of these diseases can also affect humans (zoonotic diseases). Preventive measures should be used to minimize the risk of exposure to animals and people.

There are ways to decrease the risk of orally spread diseases.

- **All animals should receive a weight-specific dose of routine dewormer**
 - Use of a broad-spectrum product like pyrantel pamoate, praziquantel or febantel is optimal
- **All animals with diarrheal disease should be placed in isolation**
- **Clean and disinfect items or areas accessed by pets**
 - Any equipment used with animals, especially ill animals, should be washed with warm water and soap, rinsed, and disinfected before it is used elsewhere
 - Clean cages, kennels and cat litter boxes daily
 - Disposable litter trays should be thrown away when heavily soiled or after the cat leaves the shelter
 - All shelter laundry, as well as personal clothing, should be laundered using a 1:32 dilution of bleach
 - Dispose of any laundry contaminated with feces from cats suspected of having panleukopenia or dogs suspected of having parvovirus
 - Animal transport carriers should be disinfected and cleaned on a regular basis
- **Food and water management**
 - Feed commercially prepared diets (not raw or undercooked meats)
 - Ensure that food is properly stored and not moldy or contaminated by vectors, such as rodents or flies
 - Provide fresh, clean water
 - Do not share equipment between areas of the facilities, especially those used in isolation areas
- **Personal protection**
 - Shelter staff should also take precautions (e.g., wear masks, gloves), especially when zoonotic diseases are suspected.
 - Gloves, smocks, uniforms, coveralls, dedicated boots or disposable booties can help to minimize disease pathogen transfer and protect personnel
 - When airborne infectious particles are suspected, glasses or masks may be required
 - Avoid direct contact with animal feces
 - Wear gloves when cleaning animal cages, areas with animal waste or litter boxes
 - Keep litter boxes away from eating areas
 - Do not use high pressure hoses to remove animal waste from runs or cages as this can aerosolize fecal material and increase the risk of environmental contamination
- **Wash your hands often!!**
 - BEFORE—preparing or eating food; having contact with young animals
 - AFTER—contact with animals; cleaning pet waste or cages; using the restroom; blowing your nose