

## 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* and other bacteria in their feces that can make people, especially children, sick.

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

To reduce your risk of these infections:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water after handling pets, their bedding or food, cages or cage items.
- Don't kiss pets or touch them to your face.
- Keep pets in their habitat or cage and don't let them roam around.
- Clean cages outside. Never clean cages or equipment in kitchen sinks or areas where food is prepared.



### REMINDER!

*Children should always be supervised when handling pets.*

## RESOURCES

**Public Health- Seattle & King County Zoonotic Disease Program**– Disease information, rabies and bat information, animal shelters & licensing agencies in King County, and brochures and other resources

[www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/zoonotics](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/zoonotics)

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

Seattle: [www.seattleanimalshelter.org](http://www.seattleanimalshelter.org)

King County: [www.kingcounty.gov/depts/regional-animal-services.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/regional-animal-services.aspx)

**Healthy Pets Healthy People (CDC)** - Disease information, specific groups and settings, health benefits of pets, pet disaster preparedness, and posters and fact sheets

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html>

**Dog bite prevention**



**Public Health**   
Seattle & King County

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

206-263-9566

Available in Alternate Formats.

## Zoonotic Diseases

*Diseases people can get  
from animals*

## Information for Pet Owners



## Enjoying the benefits of pets

It's no secret that Americans love their pets. Most US households have pets, and the number is growing. In King County, 40% of households own a dog and even more have cats. Many other types of pets are kept 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 been shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol!

While the benefits are many, pets can sometimes make people sick. It is important to take precautions to reduce the risk of spreading diseases from pets to people (zoonotic disease), especially for people at higher risk for zoonotic disease. This brochure gives tips for pet owners on how to stay healthy around pets.



## PROTECTING PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK OF ZONOTIC DISEASE

Certain pets are higher risk for spreading disease to people and should be avoided by persons with weakened immune systems, such as:

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



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

### People at higher risk for zoonotic disease should avoid:

- Reptiles and amphibians like lizards, snakes, frogs and turtles
- Baby poultry (chicks & ducklings)
- Non-traditional pets like hedgehogs
- Sick animals, especially those with diarrhea
- **Pregnant women** should avoid contact with rodents due to the risk of LCMV (lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus) infection that can harm the unborn baby.



## Tips for dog and cat owners

- Follow a veterinarian's recommendations for internal parasite control and testing. 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 for your pet.
- 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 if you feed raw meat diets or give 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 your pet not to bite or scratch. Bites and scratches can cause serious skin infections.



### REMINDER!

Take your animal to the veterinarian at least yearly to maintain your pet's good health.