

## News for King County Pet Businesses

### Dear Pet Business Operator,

This is our third issue of the mid-year pet business newsletter. We started the mid-year newsletter in 2015 when we realized we have more information to share than once a year at permit renewal time. We hope you find it to be useful!

We are dedicated to the protection of public health and the environment by working to keep both people and animals healthy and decrease zoonotic disease risks. We really appreciate your cooperation in protecting the public's health by complying with code requirements and contacting us with questions, concerns or feedback.

We encourage you to contact either of our program's Health & Environmental Investigators:

Mohamed Ali: 206.263.7836 or [mohamed.a.ali@kingcounty.gov](mailto:mohamed.a.ali@kingcounty.gov)

Leah Helms: 206.263.8450 or [leah.helms@kingcounty.gov](mailto:leah.helms@kingcounty.gov)

You can also call the Environmental Health Services front desk at 206.263.9566.

Sincerely,

*The Pet Business Program*

### Visit our Updated Website!

The Public Health website has had a make over! We hope that you will find the website much more user friendly and organized.

Please take a few minutes to visit and bookmark the following web pages as 'favorites':

[Pet Business Program](#)

[Zoonotic Disease Program](#)

On these sites you will find: issues of the Pet Business newsletter; permit-related information including permit and plan review applications and change of ownership form, infection control plan templates, signs and brochures, disinfection information, rabies information and resources, and an index of zoonotic disease information by animal and by name of disease.

## Multi-state outbreak of Seoul virus

In January of this year, the CDC began assisting state and local health officials in investigating an outbreak of Seoul virus, a type of hantavirus that can be transmitted from rats (Norway rat and black rat) to people. Seoul virus does not cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome. As of April 25, 17 people in seven states have been infected, with infections linked to ratteries. WA State has not had any human cases, nor has there been any indication that infected rodents were distributed to WA State.

People who become infected with this virus often exhibit relatively mild or no symptoms, but some will develop **hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS)** with death occurring in approximately 1–2% of cases. Symptoms in humans typically begin within 1-2 weeks of exposure and may include fever, severe headache, back and abdominal pain, chills, blurred vision, conjunctivitis, or rash. As there is presently no effective treatment for Seoul virus infection, preventing infections in people is important. People can become infected with the virus after exposure to aerosolized urine, droppings, or saliva of infected rodents or after exposure to dust from their nests. Transmission can also occur from bites or when infected secretions from rats come into direct contact with broken skin or mucous membranes.

Infected rats do not become sick and can shed virus for months. Seoul virus is transmitted between rats through direct contact such as during mating or fighting, or through exposure to bedding and other contaminated environmental materials. The virus spreads very easily among rats housed together in a facility.

See this [health alert for rat owners and breeders](#)



## Animal bites and scratches in your facility: What to do



Animal bites and scratches are an unpleasant aspect of caring for animals, occurring both between animals and from animals to people. Animal bites can cause wounds and

infections and can also pass diseases to people. Because of these risks, the Pet Business and Rabies codes have specific requirements regarding animal bites.

**Commercial kennels, pet daycares, and animal shelters** must keep a written record of all bites from animals to people and between animals, and pet shops must report bites to people if there is a risk of disease transmission. The record should contain the date of any bite inflicted by an animal to another animal or person and a description of what occurred. The record could be in the form of a bite log or entered into individual animal records.

**Dogs, cats or ferrets that bite a person must be confined for 10 days from the date of the bite.** This is necessary for all situations regardless of rabies vaccination status. During this time, the animal must:

- be securely confined to ensure that it cannot escape or get lost
- not have contact with other animals or people (other than necessary caretakers)
- not be sold, adopted, or euthanized
- be observed daily for any illness or abnormal behavior; report any illness or abnormal behavior to the Public Health Veterinarian at 206.263.8454

If the animal is overdue for rabies vaccination, it should get its vaccine after the 10 days. All dogs, cats and ferrets age 4 months or older in King County must be currently vaccinated for rabies.

If a person experiences a bite or a scratch from an animal in the facility, follow these **first aid steps**:

- Promptly rinse wounds and scratches with lots of water and wash with soap and water for 3 to 5 minutes
- If the wound is bleeding apply pressure with a clean, dry towel and raise the area to stop the bleeding
- Apply a sterile bandage to the wound
- Consult a healthcare provider if the bite or scratch has broken the skin
- See a healthcare provider for all cat bites- they are particularly dangerous because the puncture wounds caused by the sharp canine teeth often close up quickly, trapping harmful germs under the skin
- Monitor all bites and scratches closely and seek medical care immediately if any redness, swelling or pain occurs at the site
- Report any bite to the supervisor or person-in-charge immediately

People who work and live around animals should be aware of the risk of bites and take precautions. With a few tips, people can learn how to prevent animal bites and reduce the risk of illness and injury. See more information about [dog bite prevention](#) and [cat bite prevention](#) from the CDC.

## Keep the dirt outside!

### Do you know about contaminated soil in areas of King

**County?** People are much more active in the summer - being outside when the days are long and the nights short. Our pets love summer as much as we do, and that can mean dirty paws after playing outdoors. Certain areas of the county have arsenic and lead contamination in the soil from a former copper smelter in Tacoma. This area is called the **Tacoma Smelter Plume**. Watch this [short video](#) to see how simple actions with pets help keep your house clean and your family healthy. See more information about the [Tacoma Smelter Plume](#).

### Helpful resources

**Animal Poison Control Center**, <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>, (888) 426-4435: best resource for any animal poison-related emergency, 24 hours a day/365 days a year, a \$65 consultation fee may be applied to your credit card, website also has information about poisonous plants, foods, substances, etc.

**Koret Shelter Medicine Program**, <http://www.sheltermedicine.com/>: a privately funded organization that is intended to serve as a resource for all those involved with homeless animal care, website has tons of information!

**Iowa State Center for Food Security and Public Health**, <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Disinfection/>, the disinfection site serves as a complete resource for information on this topic, website also has information on zoonotic diseases and infection control.

## Salmonella and chicks...again?



Last year saw the **highest number ever of reported *Salmonella* cases linked to live poultry**, specifically chicks and ducklings. This year, there are another [eight outbreaks](#) under investigation involving 47 states. On June 2, the Washington State

Department of Health [announced](#) that the ongoing *Salmonella* outbreaks associated with live poultry have infected 16 people in Washington, including two in King County.

Read our recent [Public Health Insider blog feature](#) on *Salmonella* and poultry to be familiar with how to prevent illness. CDC also has detailed [information for poultry owners](#).

The **Pet Business code** has requirements that will help prevent *Salmonella* infections if properly implemented, such as providing customers with *Salmonella* prevention materials and having hand washing/hand sanitizer at poultry display areas.

Taking a little time to educate clients and stress the importance of safe handling at home could help prevent more illnesses!

## People get sick from pet food?

Multiple large outbreaks in people, mostly involving *Salmonella*, have been linked to pet food in the past ten years. Pet food has been found to be contaminated with other bacteria including *E. coli* and *Listeria* and with chemical contaminants. Dry and canned pet food can become contaminated with germs when they are handled incorrectly, and raw pet foods, even the packaged ones, are more likely to contain germs.

Pets that eat raw food can carry the germs and not appear or act sick, but can pass them to the environment through their feces. People also get sick by handling the food or objects contaminated by the food, such as food bowls or counters, and then touching in or around their mouth. The CDC does not recommend feeding raw food to pets, but if people choose to do so, they offer simple prevention tips to help keep people from getting sick.

Read more about [staying healthy around pet food](#) and see the new [pet food safety poster](#).



## Three local cases of hantavirus

Hantavirus can cause a rare but deadly disease called **Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)**. HPS has a mortality rate of 38%. Since 1993, 659 cases have been reported in the US, and 46 of those are believed to have been exposed in WA State (eastern WA in most cases). In Washington, the deer mouse is the rodent that can carry and transmit hantavirus.

In late 2016 and early 2017, three people in King County became ill with HPS, and one person died. The cases are believed to have been exposed locally in the eastern part of the county. A person gets HPS by breathing in hantavirus, usually when dust from dried rodent urine, saliva, and droppings that contain hantavirus are stirred up in the air. People can also get infected by touching rodent urine, droppings, or nesting materials that contain virus, and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. It's also possible to get HPS from a rodent bite. The disease does not spread person-to-person.

Rodents, rats and mice, are common in many environments. You should take the following steps in your facility to rodent-proof:

- Repair all holes in walls and floors and seal around drains and vents
- Eliminate clutter and maintain storage areas in a neat and sanitary manner
- Maintain tight-fitting screens on any windows that open
- Store pet food in pest proof containers with tight fitting lids
- Remove sources of food and water that may attract rodents; clean up spilled food immediately
- Store garbage in pest proof containers with tight fitting lids
- Call your local pest control company if needed

If you see signs of rodent infestation in a building or as you are cleaning, you should take precautions. For more information regarding hantavirus, rodent control, and cleaning up after rodents, visit our [Public Health hantavirus web page](#) and our [rodent web page](#).



Photo of a deer mouse (James Gathany, CDC image ID #8358)