



# PRECAUTIONS AROUND PETS

Zoonoses are diseases that can be spread between animals and humans.

The simple precautions below can help minimize disease risks for you and your animals.

## Hand Washing

**Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of disease.**

- Wash hands often when around pets, especially:
  - **AFTER** – direct contact with pets, their poop, toys, bedding or other objects in their environment
  - **BEFORE** – preparing or eating food, or having contact with infants or young children
- Use warm water and soap. Lather and scrub at least 20 seconds (sing the Happy Birthday song twice).
- Supervise children to ensure proper hand washing.
- Alcohol hand gels can be used if hands are not visibly dirty.

## Avoid Entry Into Your Body

**Germs that enter your body can cause disease. Protect your eyes, nose, and mouth when you are around pets or animal areas.**

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth when you are around pets, until hands can be washed.
- Do not let pets lick your face or mouth.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning animal cages. Wash your hands after you are finished.
- If dust is generated, such as when cleaning bird cages, wear a mask to prevent entry into your nose.

## Wound Care

**Germs can enter your body through breaks in the skin.**

- Keep any cuts, scrapes, wounds, even chapped or dry skin covered when you are around pets.
- Avoid bites and scratches from your pet. Keep pet's nails clipped to minimize scratching and avoid rough play.
- Promptly clean any scratches or bites received from pets.
- Monitor the wound for any signs of infection (e.g., redness, swelling, oozing). If seen, contact your healthcare provider.
- Do not let pets lick any open wounds you may have.

## Children and Pets

**Children, especially those 5 years old and younger, should always be supervised around pets.**

- Do not let children
  - Put their hands or objects (e.g., pacifiers) into their mouths when they are around animals or animal areas.
  - Kiss pets or allow pets to lick their face.
  - Play roughly with pets, to avoid bites and scratches.

## Keep Animals Healthy

**Keep your pet healthy to reduce zoonotic diseases. Talk to your veterinarian about the best health program.**

- Have your pet checked annually by your veterinarian, and keep vaccinations, especially rabies, current.
- Have pets with diarrhea examined by a veterinarian.
- Do not feed raw or undercooked meats to your pet.

## Keep Animal Areas Clean

**Zoonotic disease organisms can be shed in animal feces.**

- Wear gloves when cleaning up animal waste, cleaning cages or litter boxes.
- Change cat litter boxes and bird cage linings daily.
- Remove pet waste in the yard or kennel weekly.
- Keep litter boxes away from kitchen and eating areas.
- Do not allow animals to eat other animal's feces.
- Wash pet bedding and toys frequently.

## Avoid Disease Vectors

**Insects, ticks and wildlife can carry disease organisms that can harm you or your pet.**

- Use veterinarian recommended tick and flea preventatives.
- Avoid wooded areas or being outdoors during peak vector activity times (e.g., dusk and dawn) or wear EPA-approved insect repellants.
- Do not allow pets to interact with wildlife.

To learn more about zoonotic diseases and prevention measures, visit <https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/zoonoses>.