Public Health Division

Did you know that contact with amphibians, reptiles and feeder rodents can make you sick with Salmonella?

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

- Amphibians (frogs, newts and salamanders), reptiles (snakes, turtles, bearded dragons and lizards) and rodents (mice and rats fed to the reptiles) often carry *Salmonella* germs without showing any signs of illness.
- Amphibians, reptiles and feeder rodents shed *Salmonella* germs in their droppings, and these can contaminate their bodies and the environment around them, including where they are housed or handled.
- *Salmonella* symptoms may include diarrhea, vomiting, stomach cramps, headaches and fever. The sickness can range from mild to severe or even life threatening;
- Children younger than 5 years of age, elderly individuals, pregnant women and people with weak immune systems are at higher risk of getting sick with *Salmonella*.

Take the following precautions to protect yourself and your family from getting sick:

DOs:

- Do thoroughly wash your hands with soap and hot water immediately after handling any amphibian, reptile or feeder rodent, or anything in the area where they live or were handled (See reverse for proper hand washing instructions).

  ➢ It is recommended that parents supervise hand washing for young children.

- Do thaw frozen feeder rodents in a dedicated container, using dedicated utensils away from common areas such as your kitchen or bathroom.
- Do clean and disinfect any surfaces where feeder rodents were prepared, thawed or stored (See reverse for proper disinfecting instructions)
- Do dispose of amphibian and reptile waste water and droppings in the toilet or in a dedicated trash can away from food preparation areas.

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DON'Ts:

- Don't keep amphibians and reptiles in households with children younger than 5 years of age, elderly individuals, pregnant women or people with weak immune systems.
- Don't keep amphibians and reptiles in rooms where people's food is prepared or eaten.
- Don't bathe animals or clean their habitats in your kitchen sink, bathroom sink or bathtub.

  ➤ Animals should be bathed in a small plastic tub or bin that is dedicated for animal use only. This will prevent cross contamination.

- Don't kiss your reptile or amphibian.
- Don't let amphibians and reptiles roam freely in your home.
- Don't allow frozen feeder rodents to come in contact with food for human consumption. They should be kept in a sealed container in a separate freezer or a separate section of your freezer.
- Don't thaw frozen feeder rodents in microwaves used for human food.

Washing your hands after handling reptiles and feeder rodents:

1. Wet hands and wrists with warm water.

2. Lather your hands and wrists with liquid or foam soap for 20 seconds.

3. Scrub in between and around fingers, as well as the back of each hand.

4. Rinse hands and wrists thoroughly under running water.

5. Pat hands and wrists dry with paper towel.

Disinfecting environments where reptiles and feeder rodents are handled:

Note – These are not instructions on how to clean your pet's habitat. These are instructions on how to disinfect surfaces in and around your household that were in contact with reptiles and feeder rodents.

A bleach solution of **1 tablespoon for 1 litre (4 cups) of water** should be used to disinfect all surfaces that were in contact with reptiles and feeder rodents. To properly disinfect surfaces:

1. Put bleach mixture in a labelled spray bottle.

2. Squirt the mixture on all surfaces that were in contact with reptiles and feeder rodents.

3. Let the solution sit for 10 minutes.

4. Rinse the surface thoroughly and wipe it with a clean cloth or paper towel.

This fact sheet was prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care with the assistance of the Office of the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario.

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