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## **REPTILE-ASSOCIATED SALMONELLOSIS INFORMATION**

### **What Is Salmonellas?**

Salmonellas are an infectious disease of reptiles that is contagious to humans. Salmonella infections can result in a wide variety of symptoms in any animal including: inapparent infections, recovered carriers. diarrhea, generalized infections, abortion, and even death.

Regardless of the outcome, Salmonella infection always represents a potential source for the spread of the disease to humans. Salmonella is readily transferred from animal to animal, animal to humans, and human to human by direct contact or indirect pathways.

### **General Comments Concerning Reptiles:**

Reptiles are popular pets in the U.S. An estimated 7.3 million pet reptiles are owned by approximately 3% of all U.S. households.

Because the most popular reptile species will not breed in close confinement, many reptiles are captured in the wild and imported.

### **Important Facts About Reptile Associated Salmonellas:**

- Attempts to eliminate Salmonella in reptiles with antibiotics have generally been unsuccessful.
- Reptiles can be infected through the eggs before birth.
- Reptiles can become infected from being around other reptiles which are infected.
- Reptiles may A high proportion of reptiles are asymptomatic carriers of Salmonella.
- Fecal contamination may be as high as 90%, yet few reptiles are ill.
- Attempts to eliminate Salmonella in reptiles with antibiotics may lead to increased resistance to the antibiotics.
- Attempts become infected through the ingestion of feces.

### **Who Should Avoid Contact With Reptiles?**

The following categories of people should avoid all contact, direct or indirect with any reptile as the risks of serious infection with Salmonella is greatly increased:

#### **Infants and children up to 5 years of age.**

- Anyone with HIV/AIDS or other immunodeficiency disorders.
- Anyone who has had transplants surgery and is on anti-rejection therapy.
- Anyone who is on any drug which suppressed/alters immune function including: steroids, cancer chemotherapy, biological response modifiers, and others.
- Anyone receiving radiation treatment.
- The elderly, frail people, or people with poor nutritional status.

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### **AVOIDING REPTILE ASSOCIATED DISEASES:**

- Salmonellas is just one of several bacterial, fungal, and protozoan diseases that can potentially cause disease in people. To protect yourself and your family, follow these simple rules:

- Have your reptile examined by a veterinarian frequently. New reptiles should be examined twice in the first year and annually thereafter.
- Have your reptile TESTED for Salmonellosis. Keep in mind that the test is not perfect. A negative test is not absolute proof that your reptile does not have the infection. Nor does it mean the reptile will not become infected in the future. Repeated cultures of fecal, cloacal, and water samples is more meaningful than a single test. A POSITIVE TEST IS MEANINGFUL. Since it is very difficult to prove that a reptile has been cleared of the infection after treatment, you may wish to consider finding a new home for the Salmonella positive reptile.
- After handling any reptile, be sure to wash your hands with antibacterial soap and hot water. Washing with water only is not effective in eliminating Salmonella.
- Keep reptiles out of kitchens and away from areas where human food is prepared, stored, or served. Do not touch food for human consumption after handling any reptile or its accessories. Do not touch dishes, pots, pans, or other utensils used for human food after touching any reptile or accessory.
- Keep reptile enclosures, water/food bowls, and surfaces as clean and sanitary as possible.
- Do not permit unsupervised handling of reptiles by children under 12 years of age.
- Teach children to wash hands thoroughly after handling any reptile.
- Do not handle any reptile or their caging materials with open cuts, lesions (sores) on hands, unless such cuts are well covered with dressings. RUBBER GLOVES ARE RECOMMENDED.
- Wear rubber gloves & eye protection when washing reptile enclosures/accessories to avoid splashes to the face.
- Do not use bathtubs; kitchen or bathroom sinks, or shower stalls for reptile-related husbandry operations.
- Do not kiss your reptile.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling your reptile, its enclosure or accessories.
- Reptiles should not be kept in child-care facilities for pre-schoolers and toddlers.
- Reptiles kept in classrooms should not be handled unless appropriate handwashing and clean-up facilities are available and made accessible to children & staff.