

# Prevent the Spread of Zoonotic Diseases

A **zoonotic disease** is a disease that can be shared between animals and people. A person may become infected with an animal disease *indirectly* (from the environment or through flies, mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas) or *directly* (through close contact between animals and people).

Examples of **zoonotic diseases** are rabies, tularemia, brucellosis, plague, salmonellosis, and West Nile virus.

## Take Precautions when Handling and Caring for Animals

During routine care of animals, take the following precautions against spreading germs that cause diseases.

### *Wear personal protective clothing and equipment*

Personal protective clothing, boots, and equipment can reduce the risk of exposing other animals or people to contagious diseases.

- Wear boots and a set of protective clothing that you wear only when handling and caring for animals. Examples are
  - hat
  - coveralls
  - long-sleeved shirt (cotton or cotton-polyester blend)
  - long pants (cotton or cotton-polyester blend)
  - long socks
- Remove these clothes and boots before entering your household.
- Keep all personal protective clothing separate from your family's clothing.
- Place disposable clothing and equipment into a lined trash container for proper disposal.
- When caring for sick animals, wear personal protective equipment over your personal protective clothing. Examples of personal protective equipment are
  - mask
  - goggles
  - gloves
  - gown or apron
- Make sure all nondisposable equipment is cleaned and disinfected before entering and leaving animal areas.

## Clean and Disinfect to Kill Disease-Causing Germs

### *Laundry protective clothing separately*

- Handle soiled clothing with gloves, and wash your hands afterward.
- Place soiled laundry in a separate laundry basket, apart from other family clothes.
- Wash and disinfect clothes separately from your family's clothes.
- Use detergent.
- Use household bleach.
- Use water that is 130 degrees F.
- Dry on a clothesline in sunlight or in an automatic clothes dryer.

### *Disinfect to prevent the spread of diseases*

- Clean and disinfect
  - nondisposable protective equipment
  - boots before entering and leaving animal areas
  - animal cages and pens, including borrowed equipment
  - vehicle and trailer tires and undercarriages after returning home from another farm
- First, clean equipment and surfaces with a scrub brush and detergent mixed in water to remove all soil, food, and manure.
- Then, disinfect using a diluted household bleach solution or an EPA-approved disinfectant with registration number on the label (Caution: Do not mix bleach with ammonia).
  - Mix ¼ cup of household bleach with 1 quart of water for tires, vehicle undercarriages, boots, and footbaths.
  - Make a weaker solution of ¼ teaspoon bleach with 1 quart of water for hard surfaces.

For more information about zoonotic diseases, contact your county Extension agent or your veterinarian. If you suspect that you or a member of your family has contracted a zoonotic disease, contact your physician.

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Here are six ways to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases among your animals and to members of your family.

## Wash Your Hands

Washing your hands is the single most important thing you can do to prevent contagious diseases from spreading. Follow these basic hand-washing techniques to properly remove disease-causing germs.

### How to wash your hands

- Use warm water.
- Use liquid or bar soap. Antibacterial soap is not necessary.
- Rub hands together vigorously, producing friction.
- Work the soap and water into a lather, from the wrist to fingertips.
- Be sure to scrub under fingernails, between fingers, and under jewelry.
- Wash for at least 15 seconds to remove germs.
- When warm water is not available, wash for a longer time.
- When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

### When to wash your hands

- before and after preparing meals
- before and after handling uncooked meat, fish, and eggs
- before and after eating and drinking
- before and after handling and caring for animals
- after using the restroom
- after cleaning animal pens and cages
- after laundering soiled laundry
- after caring for others who are ill
- after blowing your nose or sneezing

Dry your hands thoroughly with a clean towel. In public places use a disposable paper towel to dry your hands, to turn off the water faucet, and to open the door. Dispose of the paper towel in the nearest lined trash container.



## Practice Food Safety

- Do not consume unpasteurized milk and milk products.
- Do not consume meat or other products from an animal that died of an illness.
- Properly refrigerate and handle uncooked meat, eggs, and fish.
- Cook meat and fish to appropriate internal temperature.



## Use Biosecurity Measures

Diseases affect livelihoods and can have a significant impact on the economy. Animal owners must carefully practice biosecurity measures to keep diseases from entering animal and human populations.

- Fence in animal areas.
- Separate animal areas from your family's home.
- Separate animal areas from human food and water supplies.
- Locate water wells uphill and at least 100 feet from animal areas and septic systems.
- Do not leave water hoses lying on the ground in animal areas.
- Reduce visitor contact with animals.
- Keep new animals away from other animals for at least two weeks.

## Pay Attention to Animal Health

Keep your animals current on preventive care. Make sure they are up-to-date on

- vaccinations
- parasite prevention
- veterinary visits

Observe your animals for any signs of disease. Signs of illness to watch for are

- diarrhea
- vomiting
- not eating or drinking
- weakness
- sneezing
- coughing
- nasal discharge
- blisters
- unusual behavior



### What to do if animals are sick

- Separate sick animals from healthy animals.
- Take immediate action if you observe a large number of death losses.
- Contact a local veterinarian.
- Report animals with unusual symptoms by calling the Texas Animal Health Commission at 1-800-550-8242.
- Properly dispose of dead animals.

