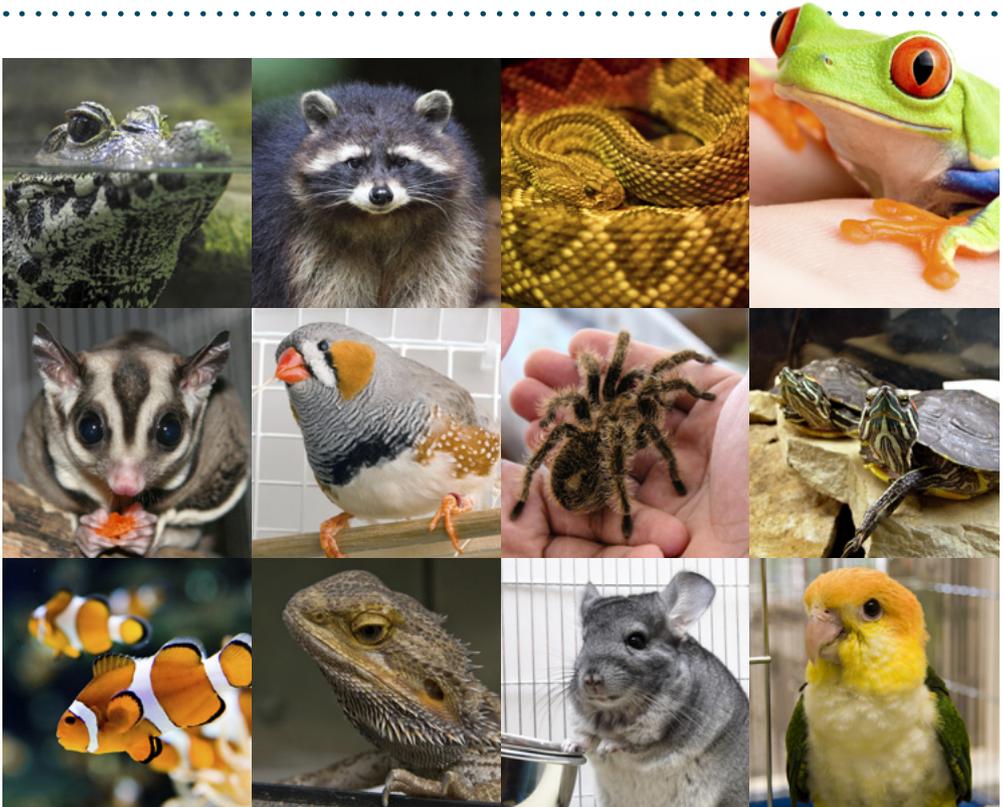


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# Exotic Pets

Reducing the risk of human infection

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**Exotic pets are 'wild' animals** that are kept in the home or sold for that purpose and include:



## **Primates**

e.g. monkeys, apes, prosimians



## **Unusual mammals**

e.g. bats, foxes, meerkats, kinkajous, sloths



## **Birds**

e.g. parrots, mynahs, finches



## **Reptiles**

e.g. crocodiles, turtles, tortoises, lizards, snakes



## **Amphibians**

e.g. frogs, toads, newts, salamanders



## **Fishes**

e.g. fishes, eels, rays



## **Invertebrates**

e.g. crabs, crayfish, snails, insects, spiders, millipedes

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## **Ownership of exotic pets involves special risks to the health of animal keepers and to the health of those around them.**

It is not advisable to keep exotic animals as pets. Many people, however, already have exotic pets, and this most likely causes thousands of cases of human illness annually and occasional deaths.

Certain groups of people are more vulnerable than others to risks of infection, for example, children under five, the immunocompromised, and the elderly, but healthy people are also affected.

It is important to note that because exotic pets occupy the home, and

that germs are easily spread around surfaces, walls, door-handles, clothes and other items, even thoroughly cleaned hands can quickly become contaminated again by simple contact with any of these items. Pet stores and the people who work there should also be regarded as sources of contamination. Thorough cleaning of exotic pet-related germs from the home may be practically impossible.

Advice included here can help to reduce but not eliminate the risk of contracting illness from exotic pets.

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# IMPORTANT

Hygiene measures, such as hand-washing, where performed thoroughly and with correct chemicals, can significantly reduce the amount of germs on your hands but does not guarantee protection against becoming sick or remove the possibility of passing germs directly or indirectly to others.



It is strongly advised that anyone handling an exotic animal or an object that may have been in contact with an exotic animal should wash their hands immediately and thoroughly afterwards. First use antibacterial soap and water, taking care to rub hands vigorously together, being careful to clean all areas. Second, apply an alcohol-based cleaning agent.



If you touch any exotic animal, avoid further touching your hair, clothes (including pockets), doors and other items (including car doors, steering wheels and gear change levers) until you have thoroughly cleansed your hands.



Always wash your hands immediately and thoroughly after feeding your exotic pet and after handling raw (including frozen or defrosted) mice, rats and chicks.



Children should be supervised so that they do not put their mouths close to or kiss exotic animals. Thoroughly cleaning hands is particularly important before touching or feeding a baby or young child. Not to do so would pose a strong health risk to the infant.



Do not use kitchen sinks to bathe exotic pets or to wash their cage or equipment.



Ensure that all surfaces that come into contact with exotic pets (including areas that you may have touched) are cleaned thoroughly afterwards.



Dispose of waste water and droppings from exotic pets down the toilet – and not in the sink or bathtub.



Do not eat, drink or smoke whilst handling an exotic animal.

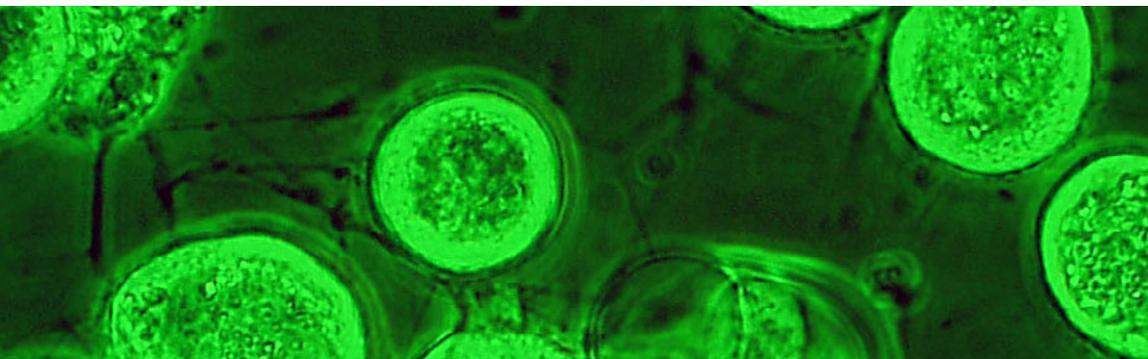


Local authorities, doctors, vets and facility managers should advise their patients and customers of the health risks associated with having an exotic animal as a family pet and should provide appropriate health protection advice.





**Emergent Disease**  
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**For more background information please  
refer to the full article:**

Warwick, C., Arena, P.C., Steedman, C.  
and Jessop, M (2012) A review of captive  
exotic animal-linked zoonoses, *Journal of  
Environmental Health Research* 12(1) pp 9-24.



*This guidance brochure is based on wholly independent scientific and medical information that was first published in the peer-reviewed Journal of Environmental Health Research.*