

Zoonotic Diseases

Frequently Asked Questions

What are zoonotic diseases?

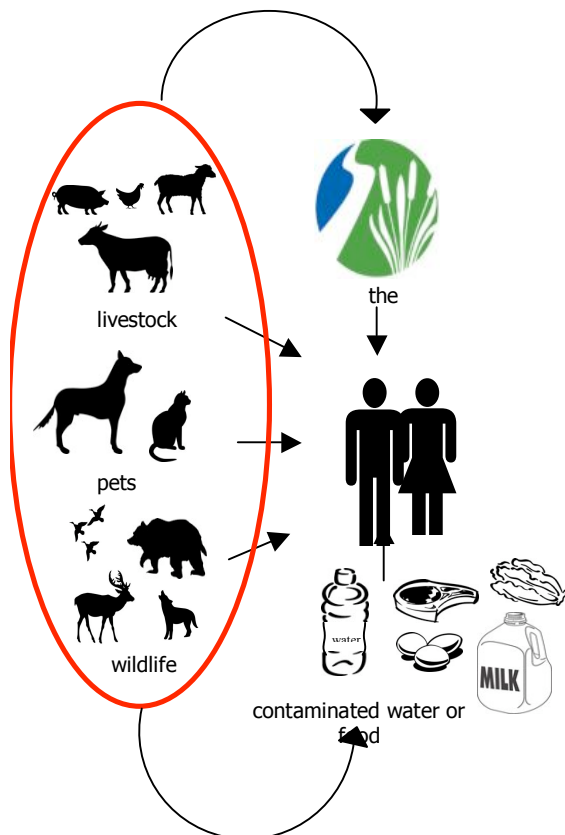
Zoonotic illnesses, also known as **zoonoses**, are sicknesses caused by germs, that are passed between (or shared by) animals and humans. More than 200 diseases are known to be zoonotic.

Some examples of these diseases are: avian influenza, West Nile virus, Lyme disease, rabies, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, plague, Rocky Mountain spotted fever. These may be caused by bacteria, viruses, protozoa, fungi, helminths (worms), or arthropods (insects).

Why are zoonotic illnesses so common ?

Many zoonotic diseases are very common and some are a serious problem all over the world. Overpopulation, moving from place to place, people traveling around the world, continued expansion of people into places where nobody lives, natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, and other factors all play a role in how different zoonotic diseases affect public, animal, and ecosystem health.

The good news is that many of these diseases can be prevented and treated. As more people learn about zoonotic diseases and how to control them, these diseases may become less of a problem.



How do people get infected with zoonotic diseases?

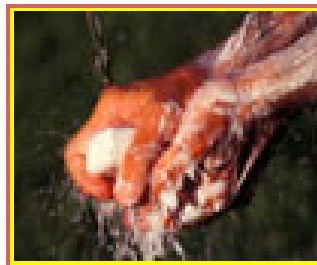
- ◆Some zoonoses are passed directly between an animal and a person, like in rabies, with the virus in its saliva where an infected animal bites a person and infects the human.
- ◆Other zoonoses are vector-borne – requiring that a vector, often an insect, pass the infectious agent between animals and people. This is the case with West Nile virus, where a mosquito transmits the virus to people from birds through a mosquito bite.
- ◆Still other zoonoses can be passed through soil, food or water contaminated with infected feces (poop). This is the case with many waterborne and foodborne zoonotic diseases such as salmonellosis, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, and toxoplasmosis.

What can I do to prevent zoonotic infections?

Zoonotic illnesses can infect humans by entering the body in a variety of ways: animal bites, insect bites, by ingestion, by inhalation, through cuts/scratches, and through the eyes or contact with other mucous membranes.

► A combination of things are generally necessary to **prevent zoonotic infections:**

- Do not handle wildlife unless absolutely necessary.
- Wash any animal bite site immediately with clean water and see your doctor as soon as possible.
- Control rats, mice, and insect pests around your home.
- *Fight the bite* - use insect bite protection techniques for both people and pets/livestock when possible.
- Keep your pets and livestock healthy, consult with your veterinarian as needed.
- Cook meat and eggs thoroughly and wash vegetables carefully in clean water.
- Always practice good handwashing after working with animals, in animal housing areas, or when working with animal products.
- Keep drinking water clean and protected from animals and animal feces.
- Minimize contact with animal blood, feces (poop), respiratory secretions, fluids draining from wounds, and injuries. When possible take protective measures to prevent transmission of disease causing agents.



For more general information on zoonotic diseases and their prevention and control:

- Center for Disease Control (CDC) (www.dpd.cdc.gov)
- National Center for Foreign Animal & Zoonotic Disease Defense (<http://fazd.tamu.edu/>)
- World Health Organization (WHO) (www.who.int/en/)
- World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) (www.oie.int/eng/en)

To find out what kinds of zoonotic diseases are most common in **your** community, talk to your pet's veterinarian, your local livestock extension personnel, and/or wildlife experts in your area.