

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.

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.

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.

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.

- 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

Launder 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.