Reptile & Amphibian Alert

Important safety information for owners of turtles, iguanas, snakes, lizards, salamanders, newts, frogs, toads, other reptiles and amphibians.

People at Risk

Because of the risk of Salmonella infection, the following persons should not keep reptiles or amphibians as pets:

1. Children under 5 years of age.
2. Women who are pregnant.
3. Persons with HIV or AIDS or other illnesses that affect the body’s ability to fight infection.
4. Persons taking anti-rejection drugs after a transplant.
5. Persons taking any medication that alters the body’s ability to fight infection such as steroids, chemotherapy for cancer or others.
7. Elderly people who have poor nutritional status.

Safety Guidelines

For persons who choose to keep reptiles, the following guidelines should be followed to reduce the risk of Salmonella infection:

1. The animal should not wander around the household at will.
2. The cage, food and water bowls should be kept clean.
3. Persons with open cuts or sores on their hands should not handle reptiles, amphibians or their caging.
4. Persons handling reptiles, amphibians or a reptile or amphibian accessory should ALWAYS wash their hands immediately afterwards with antibacterial soap or other soap recommended by your physician or veterinarian.
5. Reptiles, amphibians and their cages should never be placed in food preparation areas.
6. Cages should never be washed in sinks that are used for food preparation or washing utensils.
7. Avoid splashes to the face when cleaning cages, (use goggles/facemasks and gloves).
8. Avoid the use of bathtubs or shower stalls for cleaning cages. If these are the only alternatives, disinfect the tub or shower stall afterwards.

For further information contact the Mecklenburg County Health Department at (704) 336-2817, your physician or veterinarian.