



Salmonella outbreak related to snakes and feeder rodents

JUNE 2014

ANIMAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Animal Health Unit

The Animal Health Unit is responsible for health monitoring and diagnosis of disease in both wildlife and domestic animals. The staff provide expertise in laboratory services and veterinary medicine to support public and animal health.

The Animal Health Unit and Laboratory are located in the Department of Environment at 10 Burns Road, Whitehorse.

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What is happening

There is an ongoing *Salmonella* outbreak in Canada that has been linked to snakes and to frozen rodents used to feed reptiles. As of June 2, 2014, the Public Health Agency of Canada had confirmed 20 cases of *Salmonella* infection in people in British Columbia (1), Ontario (16) and Quebec (3).

Salmonella bacteria are commonly found in all reptiles and can cause diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting and fever in humans. In some people, the symptoms can be severe and may require treatment in hospital.

It is prudent to assume that any reptile can be shedding *Salmonella*.



How to protect yourself

Salmonella infection occurs when the bacteria is ingested. The best way to protect yourself is to practice good hygiene, especially if you have high risk individuals in your household -- children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with weak immune systems such as people undergoing chemotherapy.

Wash your hands after touching a reptile, its food or cage. Regularly disinfect the area around your reptile's cage with bleach. Do not let high risk individuals come into contact with your reptile, its cage or its food. Keep reptile food away from human food and do not eat around any reptile or its cage. Pets like dogs and cats can also be infected by *Salmonella* and would show similar symptoms as people. Do not allow cats or dogs to eat or play with feeder rodents.

When preparing frozen rodents to feed to your snake, wear disposable gloves. Thaw the rodents in a container that is not used for food preparation for people or other pets. Disinfect the container with bleach and hot water after each use. Don't thaw feeder rodents in the microwave. Try not to prepare feeder rodents in the kitchen sink. If you do, be sure to disinfect the sink with bleach when you're done.

For more information

- ▶ About the current outbreak associated with reptiles and feeder rodents: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/phn-asp/2014/salmonella-sr-eng.php
- ▶ About salmonella infections in general: Animal Health Unit 667-8531 or 1-800-661-0408 x8531

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