Salmonella Prevention Checklist

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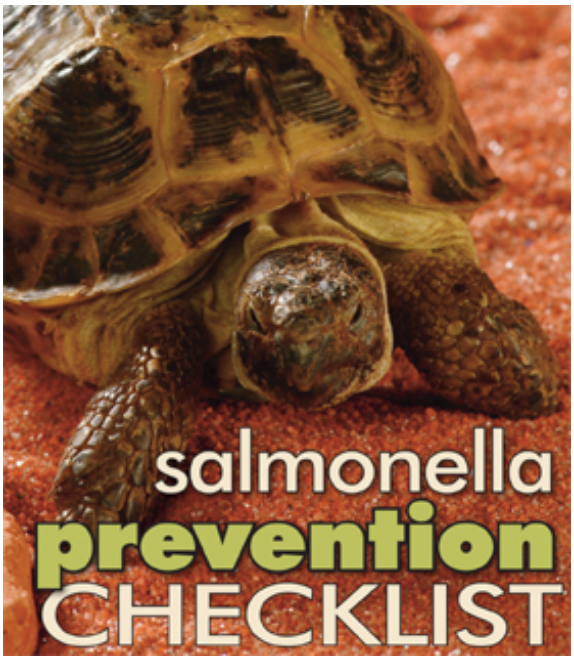

The spread of *salmonella* can be easily prevented through common hygiene practices. However, according to the Centers for Disease (CDC), an estimated 70,000 people get salmonellosis (*salmonella* infection) from contact with reptiles in the United States each year. The transmission commonly occurs when humans touch reptiles (or objects that have come in contact with fecal material) and then inadvertently place their hands in their mouths. Learn how to reduce the risk of spreading *salmonella* bacteria by following these simple tips:

- Wear gloves or wash your hands thoroughly for 20-30 seconds with hot, soapy water after handling reptiles, reptile cages and equipment, and the reptile stool.
- Do not allow reptiles to have access to the kitchen, dining room, or any other area in which food is prepared.
- Do not use the kitchen sink, kitchen counters, bathroom sinks, or bathtubs to bathe reptiles or to wash reptile cages, dishes, or aquariums. Also, do not allow reptiles to have access to bathroom sinks and tubs or to any area where infants are bathed. Reptile owners may wish to purchase a plastic basin or tub exclusively for reptile bathing and swimming. Dispose of waste water and fecal material in the toilet instead of the bathtub or household sink.
- Wash all food and water bowls and equipment with hot soapy water and disinfect with a chlorhexidine or household bleach solution (remember to rinse all disinfected utensils with clean water before using). All-natural cleaners, such as Natural Chemistry Healthy Habitat, are also available for use. For heavy-duty cleaning there is Nature's Miracle® Ultra Disinfectant for Terrariums, which can be used for killing Salmonella on surfaces.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling reptiles, reptile cages, or reptile equipment. Do not kiss reptiles or share food or drink with them.
- Consider keeping your reptiles caged or limiting parts of the house where they are allowed to roam free. Always wash your hands after coming into contact with any area where reptiles are allowed to roam free.
- Pregnant women, children, elderly or frail adults, or immunosuppressed people are particularly at risk of infection or serious complications of salmonellosis. At a minimum, they need to take extra precautions; ideally, they should avoid contact with reptiles.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that children less than five years of age avoid contact with reptiles and those households with children less than one year of age not own reptiles. Families expecting a new child should remove the pet reptile from the home before the infant arrives. The Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians encourage reptile owners with young children to discuss steps to minimize risks associated with owning reptiles with their reptile's veterinarian and their physician. Children should be supervised when they are handling reptiles to ensure that they do not place their hands or objects a reptile has touched in their mouths. Reptiles should never be kept in child care centers.
- Do not use the same equipment for your animals that you use for yourself.

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