



# SULCATA STATION

## Facts about Salmonella and Reptile Pets

### SUMMARY

Salmonella bacteria are widespread in the environment and are often carried by animals. Humans who ingest salmonella bacteria can develop a gastrointestinal infection called Salmonellosis. Symptoms typically include fever, stomachache, and diarrhea. Healthy adults can shake off a salmonella infection fairly quickly, but some people (infants, the elderly, and people whose immune systems are compromised) can develop serious (and sometimes potentially fatal) complications from Salmonellosis.

However, there is an easy way to prevent this problem: Wash your hands after handling, feeding, or cleaning up after your reptile pet.

### **What is the connection between Salmonella and reptile pets?**

Pet owners should be aware that virtually ALL pet species -- not just reptiles, but cats and dogs as well -- can carry some form of Salmonella bacteria. However, because more people are buying reptile pets, the Center for Disease Control has developed the following recommendations specifically for reptile owners:

### **Recommendations for Preventing Transmission of Salmonella from Reptiles to Humans**

- Pet store owners, veterinarians, and pediatricians should provide information to owners and potential purchasers of reptiles about the risk for acquiring salmonellosis from reptiles.
- Persons should always wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling reptiles or reptile cages.
- Persons at increased risk for infection or serious complications of salmonellosis (e.g., children aged less than 5 years and immuno-compromised persons) should avoid contact with reptiles.
- Pet reptiles should be kept out of households where children aged less than 1 year and immuno-compromised persons live. Families who are expecting a new baby should remove the pet reptile from the home before the infant arrives.
- Pet reptiles should not be kept in child care centers.
- Pet reptiles should not be allowed to roam freely throughout the home or living area.
- Pet reptiles should be kept out of kitchens and other food-preparation areas to prevent contamination. Kitchen sinks should not be used to bathe reptiles, nor to wash their dishes, cages, or aquariums. If bathtubs are used for these purposes, they should be cleaned thoroughly and disinfected with bleach afterward.

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### **Does this mean that reptile pets are dangerous to me and my family?**

**No! If you follow the recommendations given above, you should prevent any problems with salmonella bacteria or salmonellosis.**

In our experience with the various reptile pets here at Sulcata Station (we have sulcata tortoises, box turtles, aquatic turtles, and corn snakes), we have never had a problem with salmonella.

However, we are extremely consistent in keeping all water bowls clean and disinfected, changing substrates, and cleaning enclosures regularly. We also make sure we wash our hands after handling or cleaning up after each animal. These simple procedures go a long way toward keeping both us and our animals healthy.

### **More Information about Salmonella**

Please visit the following links to learn more about Salmonella and how you can avoid getting it from your reptile pet:

General Information on Salmonella and Salmonellosis from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC): [http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease\\_listing/salmonellosis\\_gi.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/salmonellosis_gi.html)

Tortoise Trust's FAQ article on Salmonella: <http://www.tortoisetrust.org/care/faq.html#Salmonella>