

Infection Risk From Animals in the Home and in Public Settings
Presentation Summary
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Exposure to animals can provide many benefits during growth and development of children. However, potential risks associated with animal exposures can occur in the following two areas: exposure to non-traditional pets in the home and to animals in public settings. The majority of households in the U.S. own a pet and exposure to animals in public settings (petting zoos, state fairs, pet stores, animal swap meets, carnivals, child care centers) results in millions of human-animal interactions each year. Many pet owners, people in the process of choosing a pet, and people exposed to animals in public settings are not aware of the potential risks posed by certain animals, especially non-traditional pets (reptiles, rodents, weasels) and animals in public settings (livestock, rodents, reptiles, weasels, equines and fish). Infections with organisms acquired from these animals can involve many organ systems including the gastrointestinal tract, skin, lungs, blood and central nervous system. Organisms which have been associated with outbreaks include *Salmonella* species, *E. coli* 0157:H7, campylobacter species, cryptosporidium species, and lymphocytic choriomeningitis. Pediatricians, veterinarians and other health care professionals can provide advice on selection of appropriate pets as well as advice on prevention of disease transmission. This discussion will 1) summarize information regarding infectious diseases associated with exposure to non-traditional pets and animals in public settings, 2) outline regulations and recommendations applicable to these exposures, and 3) define measure and cite resources which can minimize or prevent illness in children from exposure to these animals.