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Protect your pet, protect yourself

Pets bring us joy and unconditional love. But sometimes they can bring us illness. Infectious diseases can be passed between animals and humans. These diseases are known as zoonoses. Zoonoses can be spread through direct contact, sometimes through insects, and sometimes via the animal's environment.

Let's face it. Animals do some gross things. Dogs drink from filthy puddles. Cats kill birds and chipmunks. And sometimes, our pets even—gasp!—bite and scratch. All of these things and more can cause the spread of infections and diseases between animals and humans.

Luckily, there are steps pet owners can take to help keep both their animals and their families safe from these risks. The first line of defense for dogs and cats is vaccination. Over the last century, say experts, vaccines have saved the lives of millions of pets. Talk to your veterinarian about what vaccinations your pet should have. The most common for dogs include rabies, canine distemper, canine parvovirus infection and canine hepatitis. Cats normally receive shots for rabies, feline distemper, feline rhinotracheitis (feline influenza) and calicivirus (FVC). Your vet may recommend other vaccines based on your pet's needs.

Try to keep your pet away from wildlife whenever possible. Animals like skunks and raccoons can carry the rabies virus. After spending time outdoors or around other animals, check for ticks. Contact with contaminated water or soil can cause a host of diseases such as cryptosporidiosis and leptospirosis. These and other illnesses, caused by parasites, can be spread to humans. Humans can also contract fleas, mites, and ticks, hookworms and roundworms, and fungal infections. Cats pose a few unique threats. Toxoplasmosis is a parasite that lives in the intestines of cats. If toxoplasmosis spreads to a pregnant woman and then to her baby, birth defects can occur. So pregnant women should wear gloves when cleaning the litter box or, even better, leave the chore to someone else. And a scratch or a bite from a kitty can cause serious infection to any unlucky victim.

Quick Takes



Pet Safety

Do you own a pet? Or do you have a soft spot for someone else's? If so, you probably already know that your faithful friend makes you feel good. Pets aren't just cute and cuddly (or soft and fluffy, green and scaly, gold and fishy). Pets—especially dogs—provide a host of benefits for the health and wellbeing of their humans.

There's been a good deal of research about the effect that pets have on people. And organizations like the American Heart Association and the CDC have found that pet ownership can help lower blood pressure, lower the number of doctor visits, reduce depression, and more.

Animals offer companionship to the elderly, can help children with ADHD and autism, calm and reassure patients in the hospital and even improve behavior in prisons. It's amazing what the wag of a tail, a gentle purr, or stroking soft fur can do to alleviate both physical and mental-health issues.

Of course, with pet ownership comes a great deal of responsibility. It's critical that pets receive all necessary vaccinations and regular vet checks. Even the most beloved pets can carry diseases that may spread to humans. In this issue of Impact, we'll take a look at how to protect your pet—and you and your family—from some common pet related diseases and infections.

It's not just cats and dogs that can spread illness. Amphibians, like frogs and salamanders, and reptiles, like turtles, lizards, and snakes, often carry salmonella. These pets aren't recommended in homes with children under five years old. Backyard chickens and ducks also often carry the salmonella bacteria.

Don't let these facts scare you—but do make sure you use good sense around animals. Always wash your hands after petting or holding animals. Train dogs to follow your commands, and keep them leashed. Don't let your pets drink dirty water or eat something they shouldn't eat, and keep them away from wild animals. Check your pet for ticks after they've been outside. Keep shots up to date, and see the vet for regular pet checkups. A healthy pet is a happy pet—and that makes pet owners happy, too.

Sources:

American Veterinary Medical Association. *Common-sense measures to protect your dog, yourself and others in canine settings*. 2018. <https://avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/Protect-Your-Dogs-Yourself-and-Others.aspx> (Accessed 5/3/18)

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Gazpacho

Makes 6 servings

Finding it hard to get your servings of fruits and vegetables in your daily diet? Here's a simple recipe that offers you a variety of veggies.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups low-sodium tomato juice
- 1/2 medium onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 small green pepper, peeled, cored, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 drop hot pepper sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper or to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large tomato, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons chives, minced (as garnish)
- 1 lemon, cut in 6 wedges (as garnish)

DIRECTIONS

1. Place 2 cups of tomato juice and all other ingredients (except diced tomato, chives, and lemon wedges) in the blender. Purée.
2. Slowly add the remaining 2 cups of tomato juice to the puréed mixture. Add chopped tomato and chill.
3. Serve ice cold in individual bowls. Garnish with chopped chives and lemon wedges.



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

91 Calories
 2 g Protein
 5 g Fat
 1 g Saturated fat
 10 g Carbohydrate
 2 g Dietary fiber
 106 mg Sodium