After you feed and handle reptiles, wash your hands so you don't get sick!

Contact with live and frozen feeder rodents (mice and rats) and reptiles (turtles, snakes, and lizards) can be a source of human *Salmonella* infections.

- *Salmonella* germs can cause a diarrheal illness in people that can be mild, severe, or even life threatening.
- Rodents and reptiles can carry *Salmonella* germs and still appear healthy and clean.
- *Salmonella* germs are shed in rodent and reptile droppings and can easily contaminate their bodies and anything in areas where they live.
  - These germs can contaminate areas where rodents are housed or handled or where frozen rodents are prepared, thawed, and stored.
  - Reptiles that live in tanks or cages can contaminate their habitats, including water bowls, with germs, which can spread to people.

Protect Yourself and Your Family from Germs

DO:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after handling live or frozen feeder rodents and reptiles, or anything in the area where they live.
  - Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer until you are able to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- To prevent contamination, keep rodents and reptiles out of kitchens and other areas where food and drink are prepared, served, or consumed.
- Clean and disinfect with bleach any surfaces where frozen rodents are prepared, thawed, and stored.

DON'T:

- Don't let children younger than 5 years of age, elderly individuals, or people with weak immune systems handle or touch frozen or live rodents and reptiles.
- Don't use microwave ovens used for human food to thaw frozen rodents. In addition, don't use kitchen utensils used for human food to provide feeder rodents to reptiles.
  - If you must use these items, make sure they are dedicated only for reptile/feeder rodent use, and cleaned and then disinfected after each use.
- Don't wash tanks and feed or water containers in the kitchen sink.
  - If bathtubs must be used for this purpose, they should be thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected with bleach.
- Don't keep reptiles or rodents in child care centers and households or in homes with children under the age of 5 years.
- Don't let reptiles roam free in homes.

For more information, call **1-800-CDC-INFO** or visit **www.cdc gov.**

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases
Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases

CS233133-A | *Photos: (above) snake eating feeder mouse, (top, right) live mouse, (bottom, right) bag of frozen feeder mice (courtesy Backwoods Farm, Inc).*