

# When petting pets causes disease



*Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and roundworms are among the nearly 20 different diseases that people most commonly get from their pets, said Jason Stull, assistant professor of veterinary preventive medicine at Ohio State. Infants, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with limited immune function are most at risk for animal-borne, or zoonotic, diseases.

Since different species of pets—dogs, cats, rodents, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians—carry different types of diseases and at different stages of life, Stull and his colleagues suggest that families talk to both their doctor and veterinarian about what pet is the safest choice for their family.

## *Here are some safe tips for pet ownership:*

- Wear protective gloves to clean aquariums and cages and to remove feces.
- Wash hands after pet contact.
- Don't let your pets lick your face.
- Cover playground sandboxes when not in use (cats love them).
- Avoid contact with higher risk animals such as reptiles, amphibians, and exotic animals.
- Regularly clean and disinfect animal cages, feeding areas, and bedding.
- Put litter boxes away from areas where food is eaten and prepared.
- Schedule regular veterinary visits.