

Beware pet 'bearded dragons': CDC says they could carry salmonella

October 2 2020



A bearded dragon lizard

(HealthDay)—What next, 2020?

In this year of surprising threats to [public health](#), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now investigating a pair of [salmonella](#) outbreaks among people who cuddled pet hedgehogs and bearded dragon lizards.

No deaths have been reported in either outbreak but a dozen people have been hospitalized, the CDC said. In both cases, [health officials](#) have not identified a common supplier.

The outbreak connected with bearded dragons has sickened 13 people in eight states and seven have been hospitalized.

Ten of the [sick people](#) said they'd had contact with a bearded dragon before becoming ill. Patients reported buying bearded dragons from various pet stores in several states, the CDC said.

The outbreak linked to pet hedgehogs has sickened 32 people in 17 states. Five have been hospitalized. Sixteen of 23 ill people who were interviewed said they had contact with pet hedgehogs before they became sick.

People who became sick reported buying hedgehogs from various sources, including pet stores, breeders and online.

The salmonella strain, *Salmonella Typhimurium*, is the same as in outbreaks associated with hedgehogs in 2012 and 2019, according to the CDC.

Most people infected with salmonella develop diarrhea, fever and [stomach cramps](#) anywhere from six hours to six days after exposure. The illness typically lasts four to seven days and most patients recover without treatment, the CDC said.

The agency offered several tips for safe handling of pet bearded dragons and hedgehogs:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching your pet or anything in its environment.
- Don't kiss or snuggle your pet, because this can spread salmonella germs to your face and mouth and make you sick.
- Keep your pet away from areas where you eat, store or prepare food.
- Items you use for pet care should be cleaned outdoors, if possible. If you do have to clean the items indoors, use a laundry sink or bathtub and thoroughly disinfect the area immediately afterward.
- Don't let kids under age 5 touch either animal, because young children are more likely to have severe salmonella illness.

Before bringing home a new pet, research its needs to determine if it's a good fit for your family.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [salmonella](#).

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Citation: Beware pet 'bearded dragons': CDC says they could carry salmonella (2020, October 2) retrieved 10 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-10-beware-pet-bearded-dragons-cdc.html>

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