

# Key steps to help reduce zoonotic disease transmission from rodents



Zoonotic diseases are caused by germs that can spread from animals to humans. Rodent producers and distributors play a key role in preventing zoonotic diseases through good management practices, and educating clients on safe handling and care.<sup>1,2</sup>

**You can take steps to help keep animals and people healthy!**



## Housing and Equipment

- Keep housing in good repair and prevent access of wild rodents or other pests
- Enclosures and equipment should be made of materials that can be easily cleaned and sanitized



## Husbandry

- Source new animals from reputable breeders that use good disease control practices
- Isolate new animals and screen for diseases before mixing them with your colony
- Prevent stress through good nutrition, adequate spacing and environmental enrichment
- Use antibiotics only when needed, and follow your veterinarian's directions. Treating otherwise healthy animals increases the risk of shedding pathogens and leads to antimicrobial resistance
- Keep records on sick animals (e.g., location, date, # animals affected)



## Educate your customers

- Educate your customers about zoonotic diseases and safe handling measures to prevent the spread of germs. A resource that can be shared with your customers is the **Postcard: Rodents**
- Frozen rodent packages should be labelled directly with safe handling instructions (e.g. "Frozen rodents may carry germs like *Salmonella*. Thaw away from areas where human food is prepared and served. Wash hands with hot, soapy water after handling this product. Freezing does NOT kill *Salmonella*")

**Anyone can become sick with a *Salmonella* infection, but children aged 5 years and under, older adults, pregnant women or people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for contracting serious illness. They should not directly handle rodents or their enclosures.**



# Hygiene and Cleaning



## For all SURFACES that animals and animal waste come in contact with:

			
<b>1. Clean</b> Regularly remove organic material from surfaces by scraping and sweeping BEFORE washing and disinfecting. Dampen surfaces before sweeping to reduce dust	<b>2. Wash</b> Regularly wash surfaces with a detergent, soak equipment in warm soapy water, rinse surfaces and equipment with clean water and let dry completely	<b>3. Disinfect</b> Use animal-friendly disinfectants preferring phenols or quaternary ammonias, following manufacturer's recommendations. <sup>3</sup> Apply with a sprayer, completely covering surfaces or submerge equipment in a bucket, then rinse	<b>4. Air dry</b> All cleaned surfaces, if possible for 24h

## For INDIVIDUALS involved with rodent handling



- **Always wash your hands** after direct contact with animals, animal waste or contaminated surfaces, using running water and soap for at least 20 seconds
- Dry your hands with a clean towel or air-dry
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer or an alcohol-based hand wipe with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or isopropanol

## For FEEDER RODENTS



- Separate processes of handling dead stock from handling of live animals
- Regularly clean, wash, and disinfect surfaces between each euthanasia and packaging lot
- Transport in leak-proof packages and containers and sanitize between shipments

## Useful references

1. PIJAC's Best Management Practices for Feeder Rodent Production and Distribution (July 2017):  
<https://pijac.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/FeederRodentIndustryBMPJuly2017.pdf>
2. PIJAC Small Animal Care Standards:  
<https://pijac.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SmallAnimalCareStandards2017.pdf>
3. Health Canada has a list of approved disinfectants:  
<https://health-products.canada.ca/dpd-bdpp/index-eng.jsp>