

## Diseases Passed From Reptiles to Humans

### **Can coccidia be passed to humans from a bearded dragon?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

My bearded dragons have coccidia. Can they infect humans with this? Also, do they have any other diseases they can pass to humans?

Coccidia is fairly species specific, so there is no chance that you can become ill from their coccidian; however, you should always practice excellent sanitation, making sure to wash your hands after handling them. Also, during treatment for coccidiosis, please make sure that you are diligent in picking up any fecal material in their habitat so they don't infect themselves from their droppings.

Diseases that can pass from animals to humans are called zoonotic diseases. A "biggie" is Salmonella sp., a bacterium that can infect any species of reptile-or other animal, for that matter. While some Salmonella bacteria are found commonly in certain species, they can pass to other types of animals. Not all infected animals shed the bacterium all the time, so it is possible to get false negative test results from bacterial cultures. The safest way to think about herps is to presume that they are all infected with Salmonella. That way, you will always take care to wash your hands after handling your reptiles and will be sure not to clean any of their equipment in your family's kitchen sink.

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### **Need a Herp Vet?**

If you are looking for a herp-knowledgeable veterinarian in your area, a good place to start is by checking the list of members on the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarian (ARAV) web site at [www.arav.com](http://www.arav.com). Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.