

# U=U Undetectable Equals Untransmittable

And remember, the science is clear. People living with HIV can feel confident that if they have an undetectable viral load and take their medications as prescribed, they **will not pass on HIV** to sexual partners (*Undetectable = Untransmittable U=U*).

Achieving an undetectable HIV viral load can also extend your lifespan to that of a person who is HIV negative.

Contact the PAWS Team to find out how we can help you reach an undetectable HIV viral load!

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## Who we are

PAWS is a program of the Albany Damien Center. Services are only restricted by available funding, resources, and volunteer availability. Donations are tax deductible.

Guidelines are based on and reprinted with permission from PAWS San Francisco. [www.pawssf.org](http://www.pawssf.org).

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# Safe Pet Guidelines



## THE ALBANY DAMIEN CENTER PAWS Program

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## About Rabies

Rabies is a virus that can infect the brain of some animals, like dogs, cats, and ferrets. In some cases, it can also infect people.



### Can I get rabies from my pet?

Most people who get rabies do so by coming in contact with a bat, raccoon, skunk, fox, or coyote. It's been more than 30-years since someone caught rabies from a dog or cat in the United States.

### How can I protect myself from catching rabies?

Avoid letting bats inside your house, and if one does get in, call a professional or local animal control officer to come get it out. Talk with your doctor right away if you are ever bitten by an animal **OR** have had a bat in your home. Many bat bites can go unnoticed because the bite is so small and painless. And always keep your pets current on their rabies vaccinations!

## Remember

Having an age appropriate healthy pet can provide companionship and health benefits. The chance of catching an infection from a healthy pet is small and can be even less if you keep good hygiene and follow the guidelines listed here. If you have questions, always talk with your vet and doctor.

And remember, PAWS is here to help!

## About Rabbits and Rodents

A word of warning about rodents. We do **not** recommend that people living with HIV/AIDS keep or handle rodents. Guinea pigs, mice, and rats can sometimes be the reason for a bunch of stomach sicknesses, and some infections. These illnesses can be spread to people by touching the infected animals poop, or the ground where an infected animal did its business.

The most common problems come from rabbit scratches or rabbit/rodent bites. The bacteria in most rabbits can infect their scratches or bites. Any scratches or bites should be washed, cleaned, and disinfected immediately. Call your doctor about any bite. Rabbits carrying fur mites and ringworm that can be shared with people.

### How can I reduce the risk of catching a disease from my rabbit?

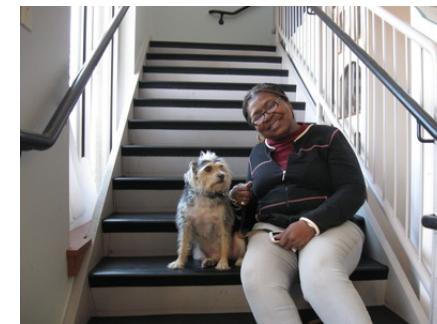
Work hard to make sure you wash your hands after every time you touch your rabbit. Use disposable gloves whenever you're cleaning the rabbits cage, or better yet, have someone else do it. Follow the General Guidelines listed earlier. If you're adopting a new rabbit, make sure the rabbit is healthy and hasn't come in contact with any sick animals.



## About Ferrets

PAWS does **not** recommend that people living with HIV/AIDS come in contact with ferrets and will not cover them. Stomach parasites can be in young ferrets and shared with people. Ferrets can also catch the flu and easily pass it to a person. Following the General Guidelines will help to lower your chances of catching any infection a ferret may have.

**Anyone** who has lived with a pet knows the love and acceptance we receive from them isn't like what we feel with our human relationships. This is even more important to us when our human relationships diminish. Animals can bring a special sense of stability and love to our lives; science shows that companion animals have a positive effect on our physical and emotional health and the quality of life we live every day.



### But did you know you could get sick from a pet?

There are some diseases you can catch from a companion animal. This brochure will help explain how you can lower your risk of getting sick from a pet. If you have a pet, or want to adopt one, talk about these guidelines with your doctor and your pet's veterinarian.

### Am I at risk for catching a disease from my pet?

Pets can have a small health risk to their owners, and your risk may be a little bit higher especially if your CD4 count is low.

## A healthy pet is a safe pet!

### General Guidelines for Your Pet

Follow these guidelines to help keep your pet healthy and safe. Just a little care can go a long way in keeping your pet healthy, which means keeping you healthier!

#### Diet

- Feed your pet the food that is made for his or her age
- Don't feed your pet raw or uncooked meat or milk
- Keep your pet from eating any animal's poop, even their own
- Make sure your pet has clean, fresh water. Don't let your pet drink from the toilet or puddles outside.
- Keep your pet out of the garbage
- Don't let your pet hunt or eat other animals
- Keep your cat inside so they can't catch any sicknesses from mice, birds, cats, or other animals

#### Veterinary Care

- Have any new pets checked by a vet and tested for diseases
- Take your pet to the vet once every year and whenever they are sick
- Keep your pet up to date with their shots
- Keep your pet free of fleas, worms, and other parasites – ask your vet or the PAWS staff



## About Aquarium Fish

### (And Frogs, Toads, and Salamanders)

#### What diseases can I catch from fish?

Fish kept in an aquarium can sometimes be the source of an infectious disease. A type of Tuberculosis can be transmitted by aquarium fish and some skin infections can be spread by coming in contact with infected aquarium water. People can catch Salmonella from touching infected amphibians and aquarium water.

#### What can I do to reduce my risk if I decide to keep aquarium fish or amphibians?

Wear gloves whenever you're cleaning an aquarium or touching fish and amphibians. Any fish with unusual lumps or that may have an illness should be taken out of the tank, and the aquarium cleaned before any new fish are added. Follow the General Guidelines listed earlier.



## About Reptiles and Turtles

### (Snakes, Turtles, and Lizards, Including Iguanas)

A word of warning about reptiles and turtles. We do **not** recommend that people living with HIV/AIDS keep or handle reptiles or turtles, and the PAWS program will not cover them. Salmonella infections can be carried by almost any reptile. Reptiles can carry this infection without showing any sign that they're sick. Because reptiles usually lie in or move through their own poop, bacteria can be anywhere (and everywhere) on the animal's body.

## About Birds

### Can bird diseases make me sick?

Most healthy birds have little risk to people, but some bird diseases can make you very sick.

### What are the chances my bird has an infection?

It all depends on the type of bird, where it came from, how old it is, and its overall health. Newly adopted birds and birds exposed to stress are always riskier. Talk with your vet, ideally one who has experience with birds, about your situation.

### How can I tell if my bird has an infection?

If your bird stops eating, loses weight, has vomiting or diarrhea, looks fluffed up and chilled, or has any other mood changes, then your bird should be seen by the vet immediately.

### How could I get a disease from my bird?

You could catch a disease from your bird by touching his or her poop, snot, or by breathing in their dried powdered droppings.

### How can I prevent myself from getting these diseases from my birds?

- Good cleanliness and hygiene. See General Guidelines listed earlier
- Clean your bird's cage liner every day
- Wear gloves and a dust or surgical mask while you clean your bird's cage to avoid breathing in their droppings
- Avoid coming in contact with wild birds, especially pigeons
- Avoid farm birds and baby ducks or chicks

### How can I adopt a safe bird?

- PAWS recommends that you only buy birds from a trusted breeder only.
- Avoid birds at pet stores and any bird that looks like they may be sick.
- Always schedule an appointment with your vet to have your bird checked out.

### Grooming/Flea Control

- Have your pet bathed, brushed, and combed to keep their skin and fur healthy
- Keep your pet's nails trimmed so you aren't scratched.
- Use good flea control – ask the PAWS staff
- Take your pet to the vet if they start to lose their fur
- Keep your pet's living and food areas clean. Wash your pet's bed regularly.

### First Aid for Bites/Scratches

- Rinse any bite or scratch wound right away with plenty of running water
- Wash the bite or scratch with mild soap and apply an antibiotic ointment
- For any bite, you should contact your doctor immediately
- If a scratch gets red, hot, or has streaks, you should contact your doctor immediately



### Hygiene

- Wash your hands often, especially before eating or smoking
- Try not to touch your pet's vomit, poop, pee, or saliva
- If your pet has an accident, clean up the mess with a disinfectant (an ounce of bleach in a quart of water works best) then wash your hands. Better yet, wear gloves, or have someone else clean it up.
- Don't let your pet lick any wound on your face or body!
- Never walk barefoot outside where you could step where an animal went to the bathroom
- Control rodents (like mice or rats) – ask PAWS staff how to do this safely!

## Adopting a New Animal

To become a PAWS member, remember that pets must be:

- A dog, cat, domestic bird, fish tank, or bunny
- Spayed or neutered already AND
- Over 6 months old!

### Animals to Avoid

Some animals are too risky and should be avoided, including strays, animals with diarrhea, reptiles (like lizards and snakes), amphibians, turtles, exotic pets, wild animals, and some birds (like pigeons, baby chicks and ducklings), farm animals, and monkeys.

## About Dogs

Most healthy dogs have little health risk to people, but some puppies do carry some diseases that could be harmful. Puppies or adult dogs that live in unclean spaces are more likely to have unhealthy illnesses. Any dog that has diarrhea should have his or her poop tested for an infection by a vet.

### Can I reduce the risk of catching a disease from my dog?

Yes – PAWS suggests that you should only get a dog who is **at least six months old**. Puppies are much more likely to have infections than healthy adult dogs.

### What could I catch from a dog bite?

The biggest concern with dog bites is having the normal germs on the outside of your skin being pushed deeper into your tissue. Any wound **that breaks skin** needs first aid and medical care.

## SAFE LITTER BOX GUIDELINES

- Keep the box away from the kitchen and eating areas.
- Have someone who is not at risk change the box. Otherwise, use disposable gloves and a mask and scoop the litter box **every day!**
- Don't dump the litter! If you inhale the dust it could infect you. Gently seal the plastic bag/liner with a twist tie and put it in a regular garbage bag.
- Clean and disinfect the box at least once a month. Fill the box with boiling water and let it sit for 10-minutes. Don't use disinfectants or cleaning products like Lysol. They could make your cat sick.
- Wash your hands. Always wash your hands with soap and warm water after cleaning the box – even if you wear gloves.



## TOXOPLASMOSIS

### What is Toxoplasmosis?

Toxoplasmosis is an infection. It can infect most mammals (including people) and some birds. Cats get Toxoplasmosis by eating rodents, raw meat, the poop of other animals, or dirt. Cats can catch it more easily if they are allowed outdoors.

### Should I worry about getting Toxoplasmosis from my cat?

It's very rare that people get Toxoplasmosis from a cat. It's much more likely for people to get Toxoplasmosis by eating raw or undercooked meat and unwashed fruits or vegetables.

Toxoplasmosis can be life threatening to people living with HIV/AIDS and usually leads to other health problems.

### Should I be tested for Toxoplasmosis?

There is a test for Toxoplasmosis and it's recommended for everyone living with HIV/AIDS. Talk with your doctor if you are concerned. If you test positive for Toxoplasmosis your doctor may put you on therapy. If you test negative, be sure to follow the General Guidelines listed earlier and be safe around the litter box. And scoop the litter box daily!



## RINGWORM

### What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is not actually a worm. It's the common name for a fungal infection that affects the skin on many animals, including cats, dogs, and people.

### How will I know if my cat or dog has ringworm?

Most often, people and animals with ringworm will lose their hair and have crusty skin where the infection is. Talk with your vet if you think your pet may have ringworm.

### Can I catch ringworm from my cat or dog?

Yes, you could potentially get ringworm from a pet (or person!) who has the disease.

### What if I catch ringworm?

Ringworm is treatable. Talk with your doctor if you are concerned about catching ringworm.



## About Cats



### Can I reduce the risk of catching a disease from my cat?

Yes – **Keep cats inside** and follow the guidelines in this brochure.

### Cat Scratch Disease & Bacillary Angiomatosis

#### What is Cat Scratch Disease?

Cat Scratch Disease (or sometimes just called CSD) is an infection. The infection usually causes people to have a fever, feelings of drowsiness/tired, and swollen lymph nodes. Clean all scratches and bites as directed. Bites should have immediate medical attention. Scratches that are red, hot, or have red streaks from them should have immediate medical attention.

#### What is Bacillary Angiomatosis?

Bacillary Angiomatosis (or sometimes just called BA) is a rare infection that is a more serious form of CSD. People who have Bacillary Angiomatosis may have skin wounds and it could affect some of their organs like the liver or spleen.

#### What is Bartonella?

Both Cat Scratch Disease and Bacillary Angiomatosis come from the same bacteria, Bartonella.

#### How is my cat affected by Bartonella?

Cats that carry the bacteria are usually not sick and may have no signs of infection. Cats get Bartonella from fleas, which is why it is very important to use flea control medication. Ask PAWS staff for more information!

#### Are they treatable in people?

If you think you might have BA, it's extremely important you see your doctor. If you are concerned about CSD, talk with your doctor. The condition is very treatable (and curable). If you are scratched or bitten by a cat and have a wound that won't heal, have a fever, weird skin wounds, or just feel sick, you should let your doctor know that you were scratched or bitten right away.



#### How can I reduce my risk of cat scratch disease and other infections?

- Follow the General Guidelines listed at the beginning of this brochure
- **Avoid kittens who are younger than 6-months old**
- Wash your hands after touching a cat
- Wash any bite or scratch immediately with soap and water. If you're bitten call your doctor immediately
- Avoid rough play with your cat, and discourage your cat from scratching or biting you!
- Keep your cat's nails trimmed short
- Don't let your cat lick any wounds on your face or body