



HOWARD BACKER, MD, MPH  
Interim Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
Governor

April 26, 2011

TO: Pet Stores and Distributors of Aquatic Pets

SUBJECT: *SALMONELLA* CONTAMINATION IN AQUATIC AFRICAN DWARF FROGS

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) wishes to alert you that certain pet aquatic frogs may carry bacteria that cause illness in people and should be withheld from sale to the public. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently identified over 200 persons, mostly children, in 41 states with diarrheal illness due to a unique strain of *Salmonella*. Most patients reported contact with pet aquatic African Dwarf frogs that were produced at Blue Lobster Farms (S & D Sales Company) in Madera, California. Numerous samples from the breeding facility have tested positive for the strain of *Salmonella* that has caused these illnesses. The breeder has voluntarily suspended operations to address the contamination problem.

**Because frogs from this breeder are likely to be infected, have already caused multiple illnesses and hospitalizations, and can contaminate tanks holding them, we recommend you immediately discontinue distribution and sale of these frogs and decontaminate the tanks or aquariums in which they were kept.** We remind you that the California Health and Safety Code requires pet store operators to “isolate and not offer for sale those animals that have or are suspected of having a contagious condition.” (H&S Code §122354(b)(6)). Additionally, if you are a distributor, we ask that you please forward this letter to your customers who may have received these frogs.

Because these infected frogs may transmit *Salmonella* to the water, tanks, equipment, and other fish or aquatic species that share their habitat or aquarium/tank, your employees should be aware of the hazard and use the precautions listed below to avoid becoming ill themselves or spreading the contamination to other animals or equipment in your facility.

- Remove from sale frogs, fish, and other aquatic species that have shared tank or aquarium with African Dwarf frogs.
- Avoid sharing equipment (brushes, nets, filters, etc.) between tanks that contained these frogs and other tanks

- Clean with a disinfectant surface areas on which water from frog tanks has splashed or dripped.
- Clean with a disinfectant ornaments or other objects in frog tanks before using with other animals or fish.
- Dispose of gravel or other materials from the frog tanks that cannot be disinfected.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after working with the frogs or tanks, especially before eating.

*Salmonella* infection can cause serious health risks, especially in young children, pregnant women, the elderly or people with weak immune systems and such persons should avoid contact with these items entirely.

Many varieties of reptiles and amphibians have the potential to harbor *Salmonella* and other bacteria harmful to humans. Pet stores and others who sell or display amphibians and reptiles should provide health-related information to owners and potential purchasers of these animals near the animal display prior to the point of purchase, not at the cash register. This should include information about the risk of acquiring a *Salmonella* infection from amphibians and reptiles and their habitat (e.g., fish tank or aquarium) and instructions for proper cleaning of the animal's habitat.

If you have any questions regarding this investigation please feel free to contact the CDPH Veterinary Public Health Section at (916) 552-9740.



Curtis L. Fritz, D.V.M, Ph.D.  
State Public Health Veterinarian  
Infectious Diseases Branch  
Division of Communicable Disease Control  
Center for Infectious Diseases  
California Department of Public Health