

Snakes poisoned at birth

February 23 2006

Scientists in Germany have found that a significant route of transmission of Salmonella in non egg-laying snakes is from the mother to the offspring during pregnancy and birth.

One source of human Salmonella infection is associated with pet reptiles and these cases are often serious – sometimes causing septicaemia, meningitis or even death, especially among children and those at risk due to a compromised immune system.

A high percentage of snakes carry the food-poisoning bug Salmonella, but until this study we didn't know whether the snakes became infected through eating contaminated food, or by another route.

Dr Matthias Schröter of the Institute of Public Health, Northrhine Westphalia in Germany said: “This study sheds light into the transmission of Salmonella. Recently there has been an increase in the number of cases of reptile-associated infection with Salmonella. It is important that people who handle snakes regularly or keep them as pets take appropriate precautions against becoming infected. This knowledge will help in the battle against the transmission of this sometimes fatal bug.”

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

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