

Are Exotic Pets a ‘Disaster Waiting to Happen’?

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On October 3, 2006, Amy Ellis Nutt, of the New Jersey Star-Ledger, published an article titled ‘Exotic pets: A disaster waiting to happen’.

<http://www.newhousenews.com/archive/nutt3100606.html>

The thesis of her article was that keeping wild animals as pets poses a major health threat. My response to her article, which was submitted to the Star-Ledger on October 20, 2006, but was not published, is given below:

although fatal cases of herpes B virus have occurred in laboratory workers, there is no known case of herpes B infecting the general public despite the fact that millions of people are exposed to macaque monkeys annually. That's right, millions of people visit the monkey temples of southeast Asia, some of whom get bitten, and yet no tourist or worker at these temples is known to have contracted herpes B. In short, this disease, though deadly, is very difficult to catch.

This does not mean that wild animals are harmless, only that the threat from exotic pets is very low and you can choose to make it zero for yourself by not going near them. Where the threat from wild animals exists is in our native wildlife. For example, you do not need to go to Africa to get hemorrhagic fever as there is a North American variety, called Hanta virus, that is spread by the droppings of deer mice and other native rodents. Howee6a0 the mo