

Cleaning & Disinfection 101

The process of cleaning and disinfecting a shelter is often the most time-consuming task that staff members perform each day. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, it is impossible to eliminate all the germs in a shelter environment. Therefore, *the goal of cleaning and disinfection protocols is to minimize the number of germs to which the animals are exposed.* Mastering a few simple concepts will ensure that this process is both efficient and effective – the health of your animals depends on it!

Effective cleaning and disinfection involves a number of steps that must be applied, in order, for whatever surface or object you are working with:

1. **Physically remove all organic debris.** Pick up urine, feces, and any other bodily excretion.
2. **Scrub the object or surface with a detergent.** Any type of soap or degreasing agent will do. Remove any ground-in dirt with a scrub brush and elbow grease!
Why?
 - *These steps help reduce the number of germs in the environment.*
 - *The activity of disinfectants is reduced or eliminated in the presence of dirt and debris.*
3. **Rinse and Dry.** Rinse with water to remove the detergent. Remove excess water.
Why?
 - *Disinfectants are inactivated in the presence of soap or detergents and should not be mixed!*
 - *Drying prevents further dilution of the disinfectant which could make it ineffective.*
4. **Disinfect.** Apply disinfectant according to the manufacturer's instructions.
Why?
 - Disinfectants are designed to kill any germs that are left behind after Steps 1, 2 and 3.
5. **Rinse and Dry.** Rinse with water to remove the disinfectant. Ensure object or surface is completely dry before coming into contact with animals.
Why?
 - Disinfectants are chemicals designed for use on inanimate objects. Rinsing and drying are essential to ensure that any residue is removed prior to coming into contact with animals.

Keys to Using Disinfectants Effectively

- Choose a disinfectant that is effective against the germs you are trying to kill.
- Dilute the chemical to the appropriate concentration per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Ensure the disinfectant remains in contact with the surface you are trying to disinfectant for the appropriate amount of time. Use a timer!
- Mix up fresh disinfectant solutions as often as recommended.