

# 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.