

## **Facts about Primates as "Pets"**

1. Often bought as cute infants, primates tend to exhibit unpredictable behavior after the age of two. As they reach sexual maturity, they become larger and more aggressive, and will bite to defend themselves and to establish dominance.
2. Many animals who have become too difficult for their owners to care for, or who have outgrown their usefulness as "pets" or profit-makers, end up languishing in small pens in backyards, doomed to live in deplorable conditions. Sometimes they are abandoned or killed.
3. Pet monkeys are often forcefully taken from their mothers only days after birth. This premature separation causes severe psychological distress, long-term behavioral abnormalities, and changes the structure of an infant primates' brain. In the wild, primates stay with their mothers for years in order to receive proper nutrition and learn necessary social skills.
4. Compounding the risk of physical injury to the public, primates of all sizes potentially can transmit to humans dangerous viral diseases such as yellow fever, monkey pox, Ebola and Marburg virus, Herpes simiae (herpes B), simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV, the primate form of HIV), viral hepatitis, and measles.
5. Eighty to 90 percent of all macaque monkeys are infected with herpes B virus or simian B, a virus that is harmless to monkeys but fatal to 70 percent of humans who contract it. Monkeys shed the virus intermittently in saliva or genital secretions.
6. Bacterial zoonotic diseases are easily transmitted when monkeys are kept as pets, and children are especially at risk. Some of these bacteria include mycobacteria, responsible for tuberculosis; salmonella and shigella, which may result in severe diarrhea; and campylobacter, one of the leading causes of diarrhea in humans, which often is found in primates.
7. While exact numbers are difficult to determine, there are an estimated 15,000 primates kept as pets in the United States.
8. There are no Federal laws in the United States that ban primate ownership or exotic animal ownership in general.
9. Chimpanzee males have at least five times greater strength than a human male, and pound-for-pound, their muscles are much stronger, even at a very young age.

10. Between 1995 and 2005, there were 132 injuries or escapes by primates in the United States.  
[Source.](#)