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News Release

For Immediate Release

Poultry Salmonella Infections Highlight Need for Awareness

Greene County has recently seen three confirmed cases of Salmonella that are likely related to the purchase of chickens from local vendors. The vendors have followed all applicable laws and have taken necessary precautions against the disease on their premises. However, these cases serve as a reminder for consumers to be aware of the potential risk for illness whenever they deal with chickens.

More local residents may be interested in keeping chickens at home. Some are doing it to be more sustainable, or produce their own food. The City of Springfield began allowing residents to keep up to six chickens on their property in late 2010.

It's common for chickens, ducks, and other poultry to carry Salmonella, a germ that naturally lives in the intestines of many animals and is shed in droppings or feces. Live poultry may have Salmonella germs on their bodies (including feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. The germs can also get on cages, coops, hay, plants, and soil in the area where the birds live and roam. Additionally, the germs can be found on the hands, shoes, and clothing of those who handle the birds, or work or play where they live and roam.

Symptoms of Salmonella may include diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and/or abdominal cramps. Severe infections can lead to hospitalization. Infants, elderly persons, and those with weakened immune systems are more likely than others to develop severe illness. Young children are especially at risk for illness because their immune systems are still developing and because they are more likely to put their fingers or other items into their mouths.

Two of the three recent cases in Greene County were children under the age of 5.

You can reduce the risk of Salmonella infection from live poultry by doing the following:

- Do not let children younger than 5 years of age handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry without supervision.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Avoid touching your mouth before washing your hands. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
- Wash hands after removing soiled clothes and shoes.
- Do not eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.
- Do not let live poultry inside the house or in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored, such as kitchens, pantries, or outdoor patios.

- If you have free-roaming live poultry, assume that where they live and roam is contaminated.
- Clean equipment and materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry, such as cages, feed containers, and water containers, outside the house, not inside.

For more information, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, (417) 874-1205.