

June 27, 2012

News Release

For Immediate Release

Poultry & Salmonella Safety Information

Following an announcement Tuesday that the Centers for Disease Control is conducting a multi-state investigation into a salmonella outbreak traced to a Springfield chicken hatchery, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department would like to stress the following hygiene tips and frequently asked questions.

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 collect eggs from hens, cook them thoroughly before eating. If you consume the chicken meat, cook it thoroughly to 165 degrees before eating.
- 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.

Frequently Asked Questions

I bought chicks from Estes Hatchery – should I be concerned?

Estes has passed all USDA inspections and is cooperating with state and CDC officials in the investigation. If you follow the above hygiene guidelines, there is no reason for an extraordinary level of concern. However, there is always an inherent risk of salmonella infection any time a person handles or comes in close contact with live poultry.

How common are salmonella infections?

Every year, approximately 42,000 cases of salmonellosis are reported in the United States. Because many milder cases are not diagnosed or reported, the actual number of infections may be many times greater, according to the CDC. Salmonellosis is more common in the summer than winter.

Who is most at risk?

Young children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised are the most likely to have severe infections. Children are the most likely to get salmonellosis, and 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. The rate of diagnosed infections in children less than five years old is higher than the rate in all other persons. It is estimated that approximately 400 people die each year with acute salmonellosis.

What are the symptoms?

Most people infected with salmonella develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most people recover without treatment. However, in some cases, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized.

Where does salmonella live?

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.

Are there long-term consequences to a salmonella infection?

People with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal. A small number of those with salmonella develop pain in their joints, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination. This is called reactive arthritis. It can last for months or years, and can lead to chronic arthritis which is difficult to treat. Antibiotic treatment does not make a difference in whether or not the person develops arthritis.

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