

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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TO: Grant County Media

**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT**

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## Backyard Chicks Can Make You Sick

**2017 had the highest number of Salmonella cases linked to live poultry**



GRANT COUNTY, WA – While many people enjoy the benefits of backyard chickens and other poultry, it is important to understand the risks associated with these fun, feathery friends. Live poultry such as chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, and especially baby poultry (chicks and ducklings), often carry harmful germs called *Salmonella* which can make people sick if they don't take steps to avoid it.

During 2017, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) tracked the largest outbreak of *Salmonella* infections to date linked to live poultry which included 1,120 cases from 48 states. Washington State had 23 of those cases, with one case reported from Grant County. More Information on outbreak: [2017 live poultry outbreak summary](#)

### How do people get infected with *Salmonella* from chicks and other live poultry?

*Salmonella* is a type of bacteria that naturally lives in the intestines of poultry and many other animals. Even organically fed poultry can have *Salmonella*. Live poultry may have *Salmonella* bacteria in their droppings and on their bodies (feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. The bacteria can also get on cages, coops, feed and water dishes, hay, plants, and soil in the area where the birds live and roam. Those who handle the birds or enter their environment to collect eggs, feed and water, and clean coops can get *Salmonella* bacteria on their hands, shoes or clothes and then bring the bacteria into their homes. People can become sick from *Salmonella* when the bacteria ends up in their mouths.

### Who is at risk for *Salmonella*?

Though anyone can get a *Salmonella* infection, children are at greater risk of becoming sick because their immune systems are still developing. Children are also less likely to wash their hands thoroughly, and more likely to put their hands in their mouths. Because of this, **it is recommended that children under age 5 not touch chicks, ducklings or other live poultry.** Others at increased risk for *Salmonella* infection are the elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.



## What are the signs and symptoms of *Salmonella*?

*Salmonella* doesn't usually make the birds sick; however, it can cause serious illness when it is passed to people. It most commonly causes diarrhea, fever, and stomach pain starting 1 to 3 days after coming into contact with the germ. Other symptoms might be nausea, vomiting, chills, headaches, or general achy feeling. Young children, the elderly, and people with weak immune systems may become severely sick and occasionally infections are so severe that people must see a doctor or be hospitalized. Call your health care provider if you think you have *Salmonella* infection.

## How can you reduce the risk of *Salmonella* from live poultry?

### Handwashing Protects You from Germs

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water right after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam.
- Adults should supervise handwashing for young children.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

### Handle Birds and Eggs Safely

- Children younger than 5 years, adults older than 65 years, and people with weakened immune systems should not handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry.
- Do not bring chicks, ducklings and other live poultry to schools, childcare centers, or nursing homes.
- Do not snuggle or kiss the birds, touch your mouth, or eat or drink around live poultry.
- If you collect eggs for eating, cook them until the white and the yolk are firm (145°F), as *Salmonella* can pass from healthy looking hens into the interior of normal looking eggs.
  - Eggs that will not be cooked right away should be refrigerated promptly in a separate container and always wash hands after handling eggs.



### Safely Clean Coops

- Clean any equipment used to care for live poultry outside, such as cages or feed or water containers.
- Set aside a pair of shoes to wear while taking care of poultry and keep those shoes outside of the house.

### Backyard Poultry Belong Outside

- Do not let live poultry inside the house, especially in kitchens.
- Do not let live poultry in areas where food or drinks are prepared, served, or stored.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Backyard Poultry](#)

Washington State Department of Health: [Salmonella and baby poultry, printable posters and other educational material](#)