

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 03/07/2019 TO: Grant County Media	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT Heather Massart, MPHc, Public Information Officer Phone: 509-766-7960 ext. 16 Amber McCoy, RS, Environmental Health Specialist Phone: 509-766-7960 ext. 14
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Don't Play Chicken with Your Health

334 people got Salmonella illness linked to live poultry contact in 2018



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 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tracked 334 human cases nationwide of *Salmonella* illness linked to contact with live poultry. While 56 of the ill individuals were hospitalized, there were no deaths reported. 63% of the ill people reported contact with chicks or ducklings in the week before their illness started, and 21% were children younger than 5 years old. Four people

were from WA; none from Grant County.

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

Salmonella is a type of bacteria, or “germ”, that naturally lives in the intestines of poultry and many other animals. Even organically fed poultry can carry *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. People 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 5 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 sometimes 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 getting *Salmonella* from live poultry?

Handwashing Protects You from Germs

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm water right after touching live poultry and anything from their environment and collecting eggs.
- 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, and do not 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 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, go to:

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

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

