
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
April 10, 2017

For More Information, Contact:
Michelle Feist
Division of Disease Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: mafeist@nd.gov

North Dakota Department of Health Warns About Risk of *Salmonella* Infection from Baby Poultry

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) warns of the potential danger to people who come into contact with live poultry, especially chicks, ducklings and other baby birds. Contact with live poultry or their environments can be a source of human bacterial infections. Multistate outbreaks of salmonellosis, an illness caused by *Salmonella* bacteria, have occurred every year for the past five years.

“During this time of year, baby poultry are often displayed in stores or given as gifts,” said Michelle Feist, epidemiologist with the NDDoH. “People can be exposed to *Salmonella* by holding, cuddling, or kissing baby birds or by touching areas where the birds live or roam.”

Anyone can get sick from *Salmonella*. Young children are especially at risk of salmonellosis because their immune systems are still developing and they are more likely to put their fingers, hands or other items into their mouths. In 2016, there were five cases of *Salmonella* infection in North Dakota associated with a multistate outbreak of salmonellosis linked to live poultry. Of those five cases, one was under the age of five.

“Even if chicks and ducklings appear healthy, they may have *Salmonella* in their droppings or on their bodies,” said Feist. “A bird that looks clean can still have germs on its feathers, beak and feet that can make a person sick.”

The risk of acquiring *Salmonella* infections from baby poultry can be reduced by following these guidelines:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Do not allow children younger than five years of age, older adults or individuals with weakened immune systems to handle or touch live poultry.

-continued-

- Do not snuggle or kiss the birds, touch your mouth or eat or drink around live poultry.
- Do not allow live poultry inside the house or in areas where food or drinks are prepared, served, or stored.
- Do not give live baby poultry as gifts to young children.

Symptoms of infection with *Salmonella* can include diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever, which usually begin within eight to 72 hours after exposure. The illness typically lasts four to seven days, and most healthy people recover without antibiotic treatment. Sometimes the infection can spread to other parts of the body, leading to severe and potentially life-threatening illness. Infants, young children, the elderly, and those who have impaired immune systems are at greater risk for severe *Salmonella* infections.

For more information, call Michelle Feist, NDDoH Division of Disease Control, at 701.328.2378 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/disease/GI/.

-end-

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at <https://health.nd.gov/news-media/news-releases>.

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ndhealth or Twitter at twitter.com/nddoh.