



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Salmonella Cases Associated With Handling Baby Chickens Reported in North Dakota**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Since May 2007, the North Dakota Department of Health has investigated seven cases of salmonella related to contact with baby chickens. Most recently, three children from the same family were hospitalized with severe salmonella infections after playing with chicks, according to Julie Goplin, epidemiologist with the Department of Health.

“Cases of salmonella related to handling baby chickens have been reported from several states and can be serious,” Goplin said. “Even chicks that appear healthy can be infected and can shed salmonella in their stool. Oftentimes, the birds’ feathers and beaks are contaminated, so just touching the birds and then putting a finger in the mouth or touching food can lead to infection.”

The risk of acquiring salmonella infections from baby chickens can be reduced by following these guidelines.

- Do not purchase chicks as gifts.
- Do not let children younger than 5 touch or handle chicks or the packaging and cages in which the chicks are being held.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling chicks or touching objects in contact with the chicks.
- If objects such as toys, pacifiers or bottles come into contact with the chick environment, wash them with warm soapy water.
- Do not allow anyone to eat or drink while interacting with the chicks or their environment.
- Keep chicks away from areas where food is prepared or consumed.
- Talk to your veterinarian, nurse or doctor about health risks associated with chicks.

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Symptoms of infection with salmonella include diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever, usually within eight to 72 hours after exposure. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most healthy people recover without antibiotic treatment. Infants, young children, the elderly and those who have impaired immune systems are at greater risk for severe infections.

Anyone who has contact with poultry and animals should wash their hands with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling them.

For additional information, contact Julie Goplin, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

-- 30 --

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