

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Catherine Torres, M.D.

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Dept. of Health, Livestock Board Warn About Salmonella Risk in Baby Chicks, Ducklings

(Santa Fe) -- The New Mexico Department of Health and the New Mexico Livestock Board advise families to avoid potential exposure to Salmonella by not giving baby chicks and ducklings to children as Easter gifts. In the last five years, New Mexico has had 15 Salmonella cases related to baby chicks. Many of the cases were in young children.

This year several other states are investigating Salmonella cases related to baby chicks. Many chicks and young birds carry Salmonella in their droppings, and it is difficult to know if animals are carrying Salmonella because they will not usually show signs of illness.

“While there are many good reasons to purchase baby chicks, we are asking feed stores around the state to strongly discourage people from buying baby chicks as pets, especially if they have young children,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres.

Early symptoms of Salmonella in people include fever, diarrhea and abdominal pain. These symptoms develop within one to three days after exposure to baby chicks and their droppings. Other symptoms might be nausea, chills or headaches.

“Children have become infected with Salmonella when parents keep the baby birds inside the house and allow their small children to handle and snuggle with them,” said Dr. Paul Ettestad, state public health veterinarian at the Department of Health. “In other cases, parents did not wash their hands properly after handling the birds and gave the infection to their children indirectly.”

The Department of Health also recommends the following preventive measures:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after touching live baby poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.
- Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
- Don't snuggle or kiss the birds, touch your mouth, or eat or drink around live baby poultry.
- Do not let live baby poultry inside the house or in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored, such as kitchens, pantries, or outdoor patios.
- Do not clean any equipment or materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry, such as cages or feed or water containers, in the house.
- Do not let children younger than 5 touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry.

- Visit your physician if you experience abdominal pain, fever and/or diarrhea.

To learn more about Salmonella infection from live baby poultry, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaBabyBirds/>

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