

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Peep, Chirp, Quack!”

(Coldwater, MI) Often, live baby poultry may be put on display at stores where children may be able to touch the birds. Because these birds are so soft and cute, many people do not realize the potential danger that live baby poultry can carry, especially for children. This past week, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency received reports of *Salmonella* cases that have been possibly linked to the handling of live baby chicks.

Salmonella is a bacteria. Chicks, ducklings, and other poultry can carry *Salmonella*. Live poultry may have *Salmonella* germs in their droppings and on their bodies (feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. While it usually doesn't make the birds sick, *Salmonella* can cause serious illness when it is passed to people. *Salmonella* germs can cause a diarrheal illness in people that can be mild, severe, or even life threatening. Infants, seniors, and those with weakened immune systems are more likely than others to develop severe illness. According to Jo Ann Wilczynski, Prevention Director, “Live baby poultry can carry *Salmonella* and still look healthy. Children can be exposed to *Salmonella* by holding, cuddling, or kissing the birds and by touching things where the bird lives, such as cages or feed and water bowls. Because young children’s immune systems are still developing, they are at higher risk for contracting this disease.”

These simple steps will help protect yourself and others from getting sick:

- **Wash hands** thoroughly with soap and water right after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
- **Clean** any equipment or materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry outside the house, such as cages or feed or water containers.

- **Never bring** live poultry inside the house, in bathrooms, or especially in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored, such as kitchens, or outdoor patios.

Most persons infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most persons recover without treatment. However, in some persons, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be treated with an antibiotic and/or hospitalized.

For more information about Salmonella, please visit our web page at www.bhsj.org and click on the Frequently Asked Questions button.

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