

Dear Pet Store/Feed Store Manager

Spring is approaching and with it come the baby chicks and ducklings. Every year, young children become ill from handling young poultry. Vermont has had cases of salmonellosis likely linked to chicks and ducklings. The Vermont Department of Health and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets would like to enlist your help in educating Vermonters about how to handle and raise poultry safely. We ask that you post this flyer by your baby poultry this year and make these brochures available to your customers.

We like to provide the following basic information about salmonellosis and young poultry.

Salmonellosis is an infection with bacteria called *Salmonella*. *Salmonella* germs have been known to cause illness for over 100 years. They were discovered by an American scientist named Salmon, for whom they are named.

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 hospitalized. The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

Live baby poultry can carry *Salmonella* and not appear sick. Healthy-looking birds that carry *Salmonella* can still spread the germs to people. Live poultry may have *Salmonella* germs in their droppings and on their bodies (feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. The germs can also get on cages, coops, hay, plants, and soil in the area where the birds live and roam. Additionally, the germs can be found on the hands, shoes, and clothing of those who handle the birds or work or play where they live and roam.

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. Young children are especially at risk for illness because their immune systems are still developing and because they are more likely than others to put their fingers or other items into their mouths.

To prevent illness, customers should be advised to take these simple steps:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water right 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.
- Children younger than 5 years of age should not handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry.
- Do not eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.



It is also important for you to take similar measures in your own store. Please educate your employees about how to safely care for the young poultry. Consider putting up barriers to prevent customers from coming in contact with the baby poultry or their enclosure. If you cannot prevent customers from handling the young birds, provide a place for consumers to wash their hands when they leave the poultry area.

Employees should practice careful hand washing after handling the young birds or touching the enclosure they are being kept in. Eating near the bird enclosures should be discouraged.

The Vermont Department of Health and Vermont Agency of Agriculture appreciate the role that you play in providing chicks and ducklings to Vermonters for their enjoyment. Raising poultry can be a rewarding experience, and following the preventative measures outlined in this letter will help to ensure that your employees and customers have an opportunity to enjoy the birds in a safe and healthy manner.

Thank you for your help. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Resources:

- **Vermont Agency of Agriculture Website – Disease Prevention**  
[http://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal\\_health/disease\\_prevention](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/animal_health/disease_prevention)
- **Vermont Department of Health poultry flyer**  
[http://healthvermont.gov/family/animals/salmonella\\_poultry\\_pets\\_safe\\_handling.pdf](http://healthvermont.gov/family/animals/salmonella_poultry_pets_safe_handling.pdf)
- **Free Educational Flyers and Posters**
  - CDC-NPIP Safe handling of live poultry poster  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#poultry>
  - Have a Backyard Flock? Don't Wing It.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#backyard-flock>
  - Don't Play Chicken with Your Health.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm#chicken>
- **Web Buttons - Tips to Stay Healthy Around Backyard Poultry Flocks**  
Web buttons can be added to websites and act as links back to CDC web pages  
<http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/buttons/diseaseandconditions/index.html>
- **Informational Features**
  - **Keeping Backyard Poultry**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/features/salmonellapoultry/>
  - **Risk of Human *Salmonella* Infections from Live Baby Poultry**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaBabyBirds/>
- Find additional resources on **CDC's Gastrointestinal (Enteric) Zoonoses website:**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/zoonotic/gi/>



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