

Advice to Backyard Flock Owners

Follow these steps for protecting yourself and others while enjoying your backyard flock:

- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam. Also wash your hands after handling clothes and shoes that have touched live poultry. Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer until you are able to wash your hands with soap and water.
- Do not let 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.
 - Do not eat or drink in the area where the birds live or roam.
- Children younger than 5 years, adults older than 65, and people with weakened immune systems should not handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry. People in these groups are more likely to have a severe illness from *Salmonella* infection.
- [Do not snuggle or kiss the birds](#), touch your mouth, or eat or drink around live poultry.
- Stay outdoors when cleaning any equipment or materials used to raise or care for live poultry, such as cages, feed, or water containers.
- If you collect eggs from your hens, follow [safe handling tips](#):
 - Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling eggs, chickens, or anything in their environment.
 - Collect eggs often. Eggs that spend a significant amount of time in the nest can become dirty or break. Cracked eggs should be thrown away.
 - Refrigerate eggs after collection.
 - Eggs with dirt and debris can be cleaned with fine sandpaper, a brush or cloth. Don't wash eggs, because colder water can pull bacteria into the egg.
 - Cook eggs thoroughly. Raw and undercooked eggs may contain *Salmonella* bacteria that can make you sick.
- Read [CDC's recommendations](#) for taking care of your backyard flock, which apply to all live poultry, regardless of the age of the birds or where they were purchased.

Advice to Feed Stores that Sell or Display Live Poultry

Agricultural feed stores should take steps to prevent human *Salmonella* infections from contact with live poultry:

- Source the birds they sell from suppliers that have adopted USDA's [best management practices to mitigate *Salmonella* contamination](#).
- Source the birds they sell from hatcheries which voluntarily participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Poultry Improvement Plan (USDA-NPIP) [U.S. *Salmonella* Monitored Program](#).

- Provide health information to owners and potential purchasers of these birds before purchase (see sample flier below). This should include information about the risk of acquiring a *Salmonella* infection from contact with live poultry.
 - A [flier](#) describing the risk of human *Salmonella* infections from contact with live poultry and prevention recommendations is available.
- Place health information in clear view where birds are displayed.
- Provide hand washing stations or hand sanitizer next to poultry display areas and tell customers to wash hands right after leaving these areas.
- Display poultry out of reach of customers, especially children, so customers can not easily touch birds.
- Clean the areas where birds are displayed between shipments of new birds.
- More information on displaying animals in public settings can be found in the [2013 Compendium of Measures to Prevent Diseases Associated with Animals in Public Settings](#).

Advice to Mail-Order Hatcheries

Mail-order hatcheries should provide health-related information to owners and potential purchasers before they buy any birds (see example below). This should include information about preventing *Salmonella* infections from contact with live poultry.

- A [flier](#) describing the risk of human *Salmonella* infections from contact with live poultry and prevention recommendations is available.

Mail-order hatcheries should put interventions in place to help prevent contamination and infection of poultry with *Salmonella*:

- [Best Management Practices Handbook: A Guide to the Mitigation of *Salmonella* Contamination at Poultry Hatcheries](#)

Mail-order hatcheries should participate in the USDA-NPIP [U.S. *Salmonella* Monitored Program](#), in which voluntary participation by mail-order hatcheries will certify their flocks are monitored for *Salmonella* bacteria that may cause illness in humans. The intent of this program is to reduce the incidence of *Salmonella* in day-old poultry in the hatchery and give the poultry industry a better opportunity to reduce the incidence of *Salmonella* in their products.

Live Poultry FAQs

1. What do we do if our child's preschool is letting chickens free-roam all over the outside play area of the school?

Live poultry should not be kept in facilities with children younger than 5 years, such as child care centers or schools. If this is not possible, the area where the chickens roam should be considered contaminated, and the children should not be allowed to play in these areas. The chicken house or area should be cleaned frequently. Older children should be supervised if they are interacting with chickens. Their hands should be washed (under adult supervision) immediately after handling the birds. In some states certain animals, including [live poultry, are prohibited in child care facilities](#) as a result of the health risk.

2. Can animals such as cats and dogs become sick with *Salmonella*?

Yes, cats and dogs can get *Salmonella* and become ill. They may also carry and transmit the germ without showing signs of illness. Other animals, such as reptiles, amphibians, and poultry may also carry and transmit *Salmonella* without showing signs of illness. For more information you can visit CDC's website about *Salmonella* [here](#).

3. Who is most likely to get a severe illness from *Salmonella*?

Most people 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 people recover without treatment. However, in some people, the illness can be more severe. Severe illness is more likely to affect the elderly, infants, and those with weakened immune systems.

4. I have a backyard garden that my chickens love to peck around in. Does thoroughly washing the produce reduce the risk of *Salmonella*, or should I keep the chickens out of the garden?

Yes, thoroughly washing produce is always a good idea and can help reduce (although not eliminate) the risk of *Salmonella* infection. There is risk of contamination of produce with germs if fresh chicken manure is put directly on food gardens. Keeping chickens out of the garden helps reduce the risk of *Salmonella* infection, as does the practice of using chicken manure that has gone through the complete composting process. The University of Idaho offers [more information regarding composting of chicken manure](#).

5. My family has kept chickens for many years and there have never been any health problems. Why?

If your family has properly handled chickens and practiced hand washing, they greatly reduced their risk of illness. Many people experience diarrheal illness and might not attribute it to a known cause or might not be diagnosed with *Salmonella* infection by a

healthcare provider. Thus, the true number of people who become ill after contact with live poultry is likely underestimated. Additionally, those who often do become ill are the elderly, infants, and those with weakened immune systems. Some healthy adults might experience very mild illness.

6. My neighbor has small children and she has been keeping a chicken in her house. How can I share information with her?

You can print our [safe handling instructions for live poultry](#) and share it with your neighbor as a conversation starter.

7. Is it OK to wash my chicken water dish in my kitchen sink? There is some bedding in it but no poop. Is it a health risk?

Items such as food and water bowls from chicken coops should not be washed or cleaned where human food is prepared or served, because there is a risk of cross-contamination of these areas with germs such as *Salmonella*.

8. We bought chicks that have *Salmonella* and my son became sick and tested positive. I really don't want to cull the flock. Can I treat them with antibiotics?

Administering antibiotics to live poultry is not recommended to 'treat' *Salmonella*. In live poultry, *Salmonella* is a part of the intestinal flora and often does not make them sick. Additionally, giving antibiotics when not medically necessary can result in [antibiotic resistance](#). Before bringing home live poultry it is important to consider if they are right for your family and check your local ordinances regarding ownership of poultry. If you purchased live poultry and are unable to keep them, talk with the store or hatchery where the poultry were purchased to see about returning or rehoming them. You can also speak with your local agriculture extension agent or poultry veterinarian.

9. Where can I get more information on backyard poultry and *Salmonella*?

More information about *Salmonella* and steps people can take to reduce their risk of infection with *Salmonella* in general can be found on the [CDC *Salmonella* website](#). Also, talk to your veterinarian about your poultry's health. Your veterinarian can play in key role in helping you and your poultry stay healthy. Another resource is your [county extension agent](#).