



Extension FactSheet

Veterinary Preventive Medicine, 1900 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210

Human Health Concerns Associated with Hatching Poultry

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The use of hatching eggs in classrooms is a good way to teach youngsters about the stages of chick development. Of recent interest with these projects has been the concern with teachers and parents about potential diseases that may be associated with these newly-hatched chicks and turkey poults.

Many of the diseases that are associated with chickens and turkeys tend to be specific for poultry, that is, these diseases are not transmissible to humans. However, there are some diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

Potential Diseases

What are the potential diseases in baby chicks and turkey poults that can be transmitted to humans? Diseases due to some bacteria can be transmissible to humans. Salmonellosis, caused by the bacteria *Salmonella*, is one disease that can potentially spread from young poultry to humans.

What Is *Salmonella*?

Salmonella is the name of a species of bacteria. There are more than 2,000 different types of *Salmonella*. Any one of these can potentially cause disease in humans. *Salmonella* can be found in a variety of animal species including dogs, cats, livestock,

reptiles, birds, and man. Many of these species carry this bacteria in their intestines and may not even show any signs of disease. However, these same animals can shed this bacteria in their feces. Other animals infected with *Salmonella* may show some signs of intestinal malfunction, which includes diarrhea. When an animal shows signs, we call the disease, salmonellosis.

How Is *Salmonella* transmitted?

Salmonella is usually transmitted by the fecal-oral route. Fecal-oral transmission means that a person can get the infection by ingesting *Salmonella* from feces or feces-contaminated objects.

What Can We Do to Protect Ourselves From Infection?

As mentioned earlier, *Salmonella* is present in the intestines of a variety of animal species. Handling young poultry involves no more of a risk than handling our pets or other animals. Since we can potentially obtain the bacteria by contact with feces or feces-contaminated objects, the best way to prevent such infections is through good personal hygiene habits, i.e., washing your hands before you handle anything that you plan to ingest.

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