

Microbe Monthly

Communicable Disease Report

March 2008

El Paso County Department
of Health & Environment (EPCDHE)

Salmonella and Springtime

Salmonella infection is associated with many animal species—including mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Salmonella has an incubation period ranging from 6 to 72 hours. The illness is described as an acute enterocolitis with sudden onset of abdominal pain, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), nausea and occasional vomiting. Dehydration may be severe, especially among infants or the elderly, and fever may be present. Anorexia and diarrhea often persist for several days.

Outbreaks of Salmonellosis associated with handling baby birds are reported and frequently involve young children, especially in the spring when baby birds often are purchased as Easter gifts. Most chicks and ducklings come from large hatcheries and are infected while in the egg stage. These birds are then sold to local agricultural feed stores, which in turn are sold to people who intend to raise these birds for meat or eggs. These buyers may be aware of the risks of Salmonella.

Problems occur when well intentioned but uninformed parents purchase baby birds as pets for their children. In Colorado, pet stores that sell baby birds are not required to post information about the bacteria these birds carry. Colorado regulations also state that it is illegal for pet stores to "sell, offer for sale, barter, exchange or otherwise transfer immature domestic fowl in lots of less than 25 as pets." Some pet or feed stores may display baby birds in large stock tanks, and young children can be exposed when viewing or touching the animals, or contaminate their hands and clothing in the process. Taking birds home as pets adds to the exposure risk.

Salmonella enteritidis is a bacterium with many serotypes. For sporadic cases or in outbreak settings, these serotypes can be strain matched using PFGE (Pulsed Field Gel Electrophoresis) which can be very helpful when tracing the source of salmonella. Each spring for the past three years, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has investigated outbreaks of Salmonella cases that were associated with exposure to baby birds (see table above). Sixty-eight percent of cases were among children 5 years of age and younger.

Please consider Salmonella infection if your patients present with an acute gastrointestinal illness around Easter, inquire about young bird exposure and order stool cultures.

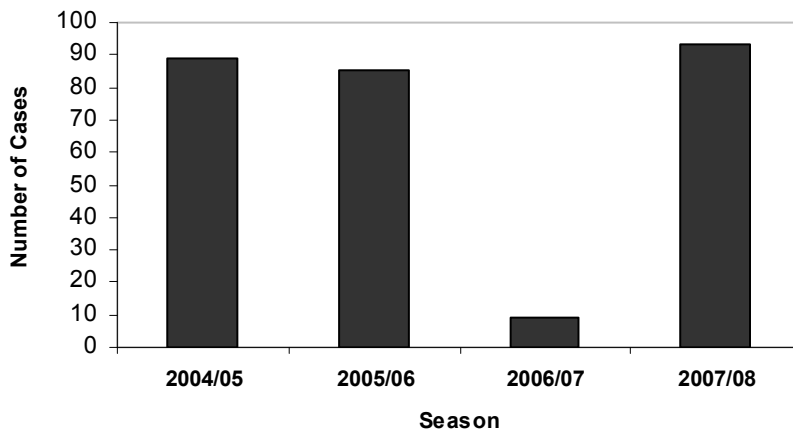
For further information please refer to: www.cdc.gov/healthypets/easter_chicks.htm

Year	Salmonella Cases in Colorado Associated with Exposure to Baby Birds
2005	5
2006	20
2007	6

El Paso County Disease Trends

- For the month of February 2008, 94 communicable disease cases were reported—including campylobacter (5), Giardiasis (2), Haemophilus influenzae (3), hepatitis A (1), hospitalized influenza (64), legionellosis (1), pertussis (1), Salmonellosis (4), strep pneumo invasive disease (8) and varicella (5).
- Influenza activity continues to be "widespread" in Colorado with an increase in the proportion of type A H3 and type B activity. In February, there were 64 influenza hospitalizations in El Paso County, with a season-to-date total of 93 hospitalizations as of March 1. These cases represent 59% type A, 39% type B and 2% unknown type. Forty-five percent of patients are under 20 years of age.
- The communicable disease program investigated six outbreaks during February: two foodborne illness outbreaks, one norovirus outbreak in a long-term care facility and three influenza outbreaks in nursing homes.

El Paso County Influenza Hospitalizations, by season 2004 to 3/1/2008 (preliminary)



Hot topics—State and National

- San Juan Basin Health Department investigated a mumps case at Fort Lewis College in Durango. The initial case had onset of parotid swelling and a positive mumps IgM antibody. Six additional suspected cases are currently being evaluated. The initial case had a history of 3 MMR vaccinations. Fort Lewis College, San Juan Basin Health Department and the CDPHE conducted MMR vaccination clinics for students and staff. Information regarding mumps is available on the CDPHE website: www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/Epidemiology/Mumps/index.html
- An outbreak of measles was reported in San Diego, California, January-February 2008. Measles was identified in an unvaccinated boy who traveled to Europe. An outbreak investigation was initiated by state and local health departments and the CDC. Eleven additional cases of measles in unvaccinated children were linked to the index case. Recommendations for preventing measles transmission include:
 1. Consider a diagnosis of measles in ill persons who have traveled overseas.
 2. Use appropriate infection-control practices to prevent transmission in health care settings.
 3. Maintain high coverage with MMR vaccine among children. For full report visit: www.cdc.gov/mmwr

Contact Information

<u>CD/TB Program</u>	
Weekday Hours	719-578-3220
After-Hours Emergency	719-385-9622
<u>Immunizations</u>	719-578-3272
<u>Environmental Health</u>	719-575-8636
<u>STD Program</u>	719-578-3296
(Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Hep C, HIV/AIDS, Blood-borne Exposures)	
<u>Colorado State Health Department</u>	
Weekday Hours	303-692-2700
After Hours	303-370-9395