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Recent *Salmonella* Agbeni infections linked to pet turtles

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is warning the public that they and multiple states are investigating a multistate outbreak of human *Salmonella* Agbeni infections linked to contact with pet turtles. All turtles, regardless of size, can carry *Salmonella* bacteria even if they look healthy and clean. This outbreak is expected to continue since consumers might be unaware of the risk of *Salmonella* infection from turtles.

Thirty-seven people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Agbeni have been reported from 13 states. Illnesses started on dates ranging from March 1, 2017 to August 3, 2017. Of 33 people with available information, 16 have been hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. Twelve (32 percent) ill people are children five years of age or younger.

Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps between 12 and 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most individuals recover without treatment. In some cases, diarrhea may be so severe that a person needs to be hospitalized.

Handwashing is the best way to prevent illness. Wash your hands with soap and water right after handling or caring for pet turtles, their tanks, and anything in their habitat. Do not clean pet turtles or their habitats in the kitchen or bathroom. CDC also recommends that households with children under five years of age do not keep turtles as pets.

PIJAC reminds businesses and consumers that federal law prohibits the sale of turtles with a carapace length of under four inches as pets, and that consumers should only purchase pets from reputable pet stores or breeders. Retailers are further encouraged to ensure that consumers purchasing reptiles are provided information on disease risk and prevention measures.

Resources:

- Updates on this outbreak and other zoonotic issues can be found on the PIJAC website <http://www.pijac.org/>.
- CDC's outbreak posting is available in English (<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/agbeni-08-17/index.html>) and Spanish (<https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/agbeni-08-17/es/index.html>).
- PIJAC's Healthy Herp Handling poster is available on our website at <http://www.pijac.org/animal-welfare-and-programs/zoonotic-disease-prevention#Poster>.
- Information on *Salmonella* for retailers is available on PIJAC's website at <http://pijac.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/FLYERSalmonellosis031317.pdf>
- CDC advice on responsible turtle keeping can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/reptiles/turtles.html>.
- CDC Infographic on small turtles can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/trouble-with-tiny-turtles.pdf>.
- More information on *Salmonella* is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/>.