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Investigation Notice: Human *Salmonella Typhimurium* Infections Linked to Pet Hedgehogs

September 30, 2020 – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced that the agency is investigating a multistate occurrence of human *Salmonella typhimurium* infections linked to contact with hedgehogs.

Thirty-two cases of human *Salmonella typhimurium* infections have been reported in 17 states between April 12 and August 11, 2020. Of 23 people interviewed, 16 reported they were recently in contact with hedgehogs before becoming sick. The ages of those infected range from 1 to 61, with a median age of 10. There have been no deaths; five people have been hospitalized. The hedgehogs were acquired from different sources, including breeders, retail and online.

Most people infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps between six hours and six days after infection. The illness usually lasts four to seven days, and most individuals recover without treatment. Children under the age of five, senior citizens and individuals with weakened immune systems have a greater risk of infection and complications.

Animals become infected with *Salmonella* through their environment, by eating contaminated food, or from their mothers before they are born or hatched. Regardless of where they are purchased, many animals can carry *Salmonella* and still appear healthy and clean. Animals with *Salmonella* shed the bacteria in their stool which can contaminate their body parts or items in their habitat, such as bedding, food, or water. People can be infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with animals carrying *Salmonella* or their environment.

The CDC and expert sources recommend these precautions to protect yourself and others from contact with *Salmonella* bacteria that small mammals, including hedgehogs, may carry:

- Supervise children’s interactions with the animal, including post-encounter hand-washing.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap right after touching, feeding, or caring for a hedgehog or cleaning its habitat.
- Do not let the animal into areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored.
- Do not snuggle or kiss the animal, or touch your mouth, eat or drink around them.
- To prevent cross-contamination, do not bathe animals or clean their cages or bowls in the kitchen sink, bathroom sinks or bathtubs. For bathing, use a container dedicated for that purpose. If you must use a kitchen or bathroom space to clean the habitat, disinfect thoroughly afterwards.

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council reminds consumers that they should check their state, local, and property laws before buying any small mammal, to make sure it is legal to own one in their community. Consumers should only purchase pets from reputable pet stores or breeders. Pet retailers are encouraged to provide information on disease risk and prevention measures to consumers purchasing pets, and to employees handling these companion animals.

Resources:

- CDC Investigation Notice: <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/typhimurium-09-20/index.html>
- PIJAC flyer containing information on *Salmonella* for retailers: <https://pijac.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/FLYERSalmonellosis071117.pdf>
- CDC information on *Salmonella* in small mammals, including hedgehogs: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/small-mammals/salmonella.html>
- CDC information on *Salmonella*: <https://www.cdc.gov/salmonella/>
- PIJAC health alerts on zoonotic diseases: <https://pijac.org/animal-welfare-and-programs/zoonotic-disease-prevention/healthalerts>
- PIJAC website updates on this outbreak and other zoonotic issues: <http://www.pijac.org>
- CDC information on outbreaks of zoonotic diseases spread between animals and humans in the United States: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/outbreaks.html>