

# Salmonellosis

## What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is caused by a group of bacteria found in the intestinal tract of humans and animals. *Salmonella* (SAL-moh-NEL-uh) bacteria are shed in feces of infected animals or people and cause diarrheal illness, which can be quite severe in the young, elderly and individuals with weakened immune systems. Each year in the U.S., an estimated 40,000 cases of salmonellosis are reported.

## What animals get salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis can affect a many animal species including birds, reptiles and amphibians. Infections are most common in poultry, swine and reptiles. Disease can be seen in cattle, pigs and horses but is uncommon in cats and dogs.

## How can my animal get salmonellosis?

Animals become infected with *Salmonella* through a fecal-oral route of transmission. This occurs by eating materials (e.g., feed, water, pasture grass) contaminated with feces of an infected animal. The bacteria can also be spread through **direct contact** with an infected animal or by objects (boots, coveralls, etc.) contaminated by fecal material from infected animals. The bacteria can live for months to years in warm, wet environments.

## How does salmonellosis affect my animal?

Most animals infected with *Salmonella* do not show signs of disease. Clinical signs depend on the age and type of animal infected. Disease is usually more severe in stressed, young, or pregnant animals.

Signs can include watery, foul smelling diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever. Dehydration and shock can occur and lead to death; this is most common in young animals. Some animals infected with *Salmonella* may not show signs of illness but shed the bacteria in their feces when they are stressed.

## Can I get salmonellosis?

Yes. People most commonly get salmonellosis from eating (**oral**) improperly cooked food, such as meat, eggs or unpasteurized milk/dairy products. People can also get salmonellosis by **direct contact** with feces/diarrhea from infected animals. If hands are not washed after contact, incidental oral ingestion can occur. This can happen after touching any infected animal (e.g. handling baby chicks and ducklings, lizards, or turtles).

Disease in humans usually develops 12 to 72 hours after exposure. Signs include diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramping, which usually resolves in 4 to 7 days. Most people recover without treatment, but some may require hospitalization.



**Salmonellosis**  
is a diarrheal disease  
caused by bacteria  
found in raw eggs or  
undercooked poultry.

Photo shows an electron micrograph of the *Salmonella* bacteria (pink) from the Illinois Department of Public Health

Serious complications can occur and are most common in young children, the elderly and persons with weakened immune systems.

## Who should I contact if I suspect salmonellosis?

### In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

### In Humans –

Contact your physician.

## How can I protect my animal from salmonellosis?

Observe your animals for any signs of illness. Isolate any animal that are showing signs of illness. Clean up animal feces and dispose of it. Disinfect the environment of the animals.

## How can I protect myself from salmonellosis?

Thoroughly cook animal products, such as meat and eggs. Do not drink unpasteurized milk. Always wash hands after having contact with animals or their feces. This is especially important after visiting petting zoos, and especially after touching lizards or turtles. Remember that young children, elderly adults, and people with concurrent illnesses are the most susceptible to this disease.

## For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Salmonellosis at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/>

CDC website. Salmonellosis at [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/salmonellosis\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/salmonellosis_g.htm)