

# Happy health hens

Keeping chickens as pets can be a rewarding experience, particularly for children. Chickens may live up to 10 years if well cared for and can provide eggs for your family.

However, poultry can carry diseases such as *Salmonella*, even when they appear healthy and clean.

*Salmonella* is a bacteria commonly found in animals, including poultry. It can cause illness to humans such as gastroenteritis (commonly known as 'gastro') when contaminated eggs are consumed.

The bacteria is able to survive for long periods without a host and can multiply in the right conditions without a host animal. This means it can be carried long distances on vehicles, eggs, packaging, clothing, in people's hair, and can survive and multiply in feed and drinking water.

When first obtaining chickens, it is best to purchase vaccinated birds from a single reliable commercial source. Do not get birds from a variety of sources as this can increase the risk of introducing diseases.

To reduce the risk of *Salmonella* infection from eggs produced at home:

- always keep the nest boxes and poultry housing clean and dry
- collect eggs frequently, especially in warmer weather
- discard cracked and dirty eggs, or eggs found on the floor
- do not wash your eggs with water. If needed, slightly dirty uncracked eggs can be wiped with dry paper towel
- always wash your hands with soap and running water after handling the chickens, eggs, feed and waste
- always feed your birds commercial poultry feed. Do not feed birds scraps as they might be contaminated
- store eggs in a clean container in the fridge, separate to ready-to-eat foods
- cook eggs thoroughly to destroy the *Salmonella* bacteria
- make the chicken coop less attractive to rodents by storing chook feed in a sealed container, cleaning up any spills and removing leftover food at night
- avoid letting children cuddle or kiss the birds, touching their own mouth, eating or drinking around poultry.

If your birds are unwell or show signs of weakness, depression, poor growth, diarrhoea and dehydration, contact your vet.

If your chooks have been treated with any medication, discard any eggs that are laid by that hen while it is taking the medication and for about 4 weeks after treatment has ceased.

For more information visit:

<https://www.safefood.qld.gov.au/newsroom/salmonella-enteritidis-se-and-the-recall-of-eggs/>

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/poultry-and-birds/health-disease/salmonella-enteritidis>

[agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/poultry-diseases/salmonella-enteritidis](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/poultry-diseases/salmonella-enteritidis)

[https://dpi.wa.gov.au/Documents/Salmonella\\_General%20information\\_FACTSHEET.pdf](https://dpi.wa.gov.au/Documents/Salmonella_General%20information_FACTSHEET.pdf)

[https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal\\_health/poultry/salmonella\\_enteritidis](https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/poultry/salmonella_enteritidis)

or

[australianeggs.org.au/facts-and-tips/eggs-and-salmonella/](http://australianeggs.org.au/facts-and-tips/eggs-and-salmonella/)