

**HUNTERDON COUNTY**  
**DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

PO Box 2900, Flemington, New Jersey 08822

Date: February 8, 2012

Page 1 of 2 (w/ attachment)



**ADVISORY: Salmonellosis Associated with Pet Turtle Exposures**

**To: Healthcare Providers, Vets, Pets Shops, School Nurses, Daycares & Local Boards of Health**

**From: Colin T. Campbell, Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program**

**Phone:** 609-826-4872; **Email:** [colin.campbell@doh.state.nj.us](mailto:colin.campbell@doh.state.nj.us)

**Faye E. Sorhage, Infectious and Zoonotic Disease Program**

**Phone:** 609-826-4872; **Email:** [faye.sorhage@doh.state.nj.us](mailto:faye.sorhage@doh.state.nj.us)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published a new report entitled "Outbreak of Salmonellosis Associated with Pet Turtle Exposures - United States, 2011". This report describes an outbreak of 132 human Salmonella infections that occurred between August 2010 and September 2011 and were associated with exposure to small turtles (shell lengths < 4 inches). Many of these infections occurred in young children, in which illness can be severe and cause hospitalization.

Despite a three decade federal ban on the sale of small turtles, they continue to be sold illegally at flea markets and other venues and Salmonella transmission continues to occur. The CDC had reported similar outbreaks in 2007 and 2008. Increasing enforcement of existing regulations, increasing penalties for illegal sales and emphasizing regulations by the Food and Drug Administration can assist in decreasing infections acquired from these reptiles. In New Jersey, the sale and distribution of all turtles is prohibited, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:23-2.1. It should be emphasized to the public that turtles and other reptiles and amphibians are not appropriate pets in households with young children or other high risk individuals (pregnant women, older persons and the immune-compromised). The CDC report is available online:

[http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6104a4.htm?s\\_cid=mm6104a4\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6104a4.htm?s_cid=mm6104a4_w) .

The CDC has also produced educational materials on human Salmonella infections associated with small turtles and other reptiles. A web-friendly flyer is online, for printing or download: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/posters.htm>

Distribution of this educational flyer conveys important prevention messages to pet shops that sell reptiles (e.g., iguanas and snakes) or amphibians (e.g., frogs), as well as to any individuals, groups, or organizations involved with turtles and other reptiles and amphibians. Pet shops and other venues that are selling turtles should be ordered to immediately cease this activity. We also recommend that these flyers be displayed where young children may come into contact with reptiles, such as flea markets, day care centers, and schools.