



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Real Bunnies and Chicks Grow Into Rabbits and Chickens

Think twice about giving them to children for Easter

GRAND RAPIDS – Dyeing Easter Eggs or going on Easter Egg Hunts are a part of the holiday tradition for many families. But there is another tradition that families should consider long and hard before making a commitment: buying live bunnies and chicks. The Kent County Health Department recommends giving children toy stuffed animals instead. Adults should consider the longevity, as well as health and safety issues, of giving bunnies or chicks to children for Easter.

Rabbits can live seven to ten years, while chickens can live into their teens. “The Kent County Animal Shelter received nearly a hundred unwanted rabbits and chickens last year,” according to Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “Pet rabbits have specific health needs, special diets, and must live indoors. While they can be very social with the right care and supervision, they don’t like to be held or cuddled.” Releasing a house-raised rabbit into the wild leaves the animal vulnerable to predators.

Raising chicks and other poultry has become popular, but it has also led to an increase in *Salmonella* outbreaks in humans. *Salmonella* is common in baby poultry and spreads from contact with the birds or their environments. Birds with *Salmonella* may appear healthy, but in humans, the bacteria can cause diarrhea, stomach cramping, fever, and dehydration. Illness can last for up to a week and can be serious in young children, older adults, or those with weakened immune systems.

Children under the age of five should have adult supervision when handling chicks or chickens. “Be sure to wash your hands and your child’s hands thoroughly after handling chicks or chickens,” London says. “Don’t let children snuggle or kiss chicks. And never allow chicks or chickens into bathrooms, kitchens, or areas where food is prepared, stored, or eaten.” Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for more information:
<http://www.cdc.gov/media/dpk/2013/dpk-live-poultry-salmonella.html>.

If giving or receiving plants for the holiday, make sure they stay out of the reach of any pets. Some items, such as lilies and daisies, can be toxic to pets. For a complete list, check out:
www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/poison-control/Plants.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.