



**NORTHERN KENTUCKY ANIMAL SHELTERS MAKE PLEA THIS EASTER**

*BOONE COUNTY, KY*—The Boone, Kenton, and Campbell County Animal Shelters are asking the community not to purchase live animals as an Easter gift.

Easter brings to mind brightly colored eggs, baskets full of candy, and large chocolate bunnies. Traditions associated with the Easter season are enjoyable for children and adults alike. However, some Easter traditions are of particular concern for children, placing them at risk for serious illness. Baby animals, including baby chicks and ducks, are sometimes given as gifts or put on display because they are so soft and cute. Many people do not realize the potential danger baby chicks and ducklings can be to small children. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), young birds often carry harmful bacteria called *Salmonella*. And, each spring some children become infected with *Salmonella* after receiving a baby chick or duckling for Easter.

Harmful bacteria carried in the chick's and duckling's intestine contaminates their environment and the entire surface of the animal. Children can be exposed to the bacteria by simply holding, cuddling, or kissing the birds. Children are most susceptible to infection because they are more likely than others to put their fingers into their mouths and because their immune systems are still developing.

Another concern for area animal shelters is the influx of these types of animals following the Easter season. In 2008, the Boone County Animal Shelter alone received 53 unwanted rabbits, chickens, ducks, and geese. "These cute fuzzy animals are purchased on impulse without consideration for the long term commitment and care required", said Beckey Reiter, Director of Boone County Animal Care and Control.

"Parents give baby bunnies, chicks, and ducklings to their children because they got one as a kid", states Lisa Bowman, Campbell County Animal Shelter Director. "But in a few weeks the babies grow up, the children lose interest and the animals are evicted to fend for themselves or end up in shelters."

Dan Evans, Director of the Kenton County Animal Shelter, explains, "The traditional Easter pet are purchased at a very young age and require extra monitoring, proper nutrition and environment. They rely on the body heat of their siblings to maintain proper body temperature. Sadly, some children wake to find their new little pet did not survive the night."

"Considering the risk to both the children and the animals, this Easter, parents should consider giving a chocolate bunny or stuffed animal", states Reiter. "Then use this as an opportunity to educate your children by doing some research into the care of the animal and visit your local shelter as a family to pick out that perfect pet."

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If you would like more information about this topic please contact the Boone County Animal Shelter at (859) 586-5280.