



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **This Easter, Give Toy Bunnies, Not Live Ones!**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Baby bunnies and chicks grow up to be rabbits and chickens. Before you decide live Easter pets would be a cute gift for your kids, be sure you do plenty of homework. Adults should consider the life cycle, as well as health and safety issues, of giving bunnies or chicks to children for Easter. The Kent County Health Department recommends giving children toy stuffed animals instead.

“Those who adopt these pets should be aware of the responsibilities and the health-related concerns that come with these pets - both human and animal health concerns,” according to Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “Municipalities may have restrictions on adult chickens. Be sure you know what the legal or neighborhood association requirements are before you buy chicks.” Every year, the Kent County Animal Shelter receives dozens of unwanted rabbits from people who can’t care for them. The shelter no longer takes in unwanted or stray chicks or chickens.

Raising chicks and other poultry is popular and can be safe, but in recent years, there has been 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. 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. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more information [here](#).

Rabbits can live seven to ten years. 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.

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](http://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 three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).