



Bulletin No. 12  
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Enteric Diseases, Turtles

## **VIRUS WATCH**

During the month of May, the Virology-Rabies Laboratory in Fairbanks isolated Adenoviruses, Types 1, 7, and 10 from patients with respiratory symptoms. Specimens were submitted from Bethel, Anchorage and Fairbanks.

## **FERTILE TURTLE EGGS AND TURTLES - A DANGER**

The Food and Drug Administration has moved to ban commercial distribution and sale of pet baby turtles and turtle eggs.

Despite prolonged and intensive control efforts of FDA, in cooperation with state and local health officials, turtles continue to be a significant carrier of pathogenic organisms, particularly affecting small children. A total ban of sales is the only action which will adequately protect the public health.

Turtles carry salmonella and Arizona organisms, which can cause acute gastrointestinal infections leading to other complications and even death. The organisms are transmitted to children when they play with pet turtles and put their hands in their mouths without washing them. Adults can become infected through contamination of their hands or of food and kitchen utensils.

It has been estimated that thousands of cases of salmonellosis each year in the United States are turtle associated.

For the past two years, the FDA has required shippers to certify that their turtles were free of salmonella or Arizona organisms. Turtles properly certified under the program as free of the disease producing organisms, nevertheless, were highly susceptible to re-contamination from bacteria in their food and in their water environment. A survey showed that 54 percent of the turtles certified as salmonella or Arizona free between December, 1972 and December, 1973 were contaminated when retested.

The ban will apply to fertile turtle eggs and live turtles with a shell length of less than four inches. Shipment for scientific, educational or exhibition purposes will continue to be allowed.