



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Contact:** Public Information Officer  
970.400.2380 (office)

### Handwashing Best Protection for Gastrointestinal Disease Spike

**Weld County, CO** – Diseases that cause severe stomach distress, including cramps, vomiting, and diarrhea are on the rise. The illnesses, also known as enteric diseases—include campylobacteriosis, cryptosporidiosis, giardiasis, salmonellosis, and others. The microorganisms that make you sick enter the human body via swallowing contaminated food, water, or exposure to the bacteria from feces or urine from animals. “Proper handwashing is your best defense against many diseases and illnesses,” said Mark E. Wallace, MD, MPH, Executive Director of the Weld County Health Department. “It’s essential to wash your hands before eating, drinking, or touching your face.”

Health officials say the enteric disease cases are widespread throughout the county, and are not located in one specific area. Enteric diseases are primarily contracted where humans and animals interact, such as people who work with or near livestock, horses, domestic animals, and even youth who play on outdoor sports fields where geese tend to congregate—and poop. From January to the end of August 2017, there are 167 confirmed cases of enteric disease in Weld County. Comparing the same time frame from 2016, there were 138 cases. The month of August saw nearly a doubling of cases of campylobacteriosis (32 cases), *E. coli* (7 cases), and cryptosporidiosis (6 cases). Nearly all the reported enteric disease cases involved animal and human interactions.

Prevention of enteric diseases include the following:

- Wash hands with soap and water after working with or near animals, using the bathroom, changing diapers, working outside, or caring for someone who is sick.
- Always wash hands before preparing food, eating, drinking, or touching one’s face.
- Hand sanitizing products (such as a spray, gel, or tissue) can be helpful when soap and water are not available. Hands must be clean from dirt for the sanitizing product to be effective.
- Do not drink untreated water, even if it looks clear, such as from a mountain stream or lake.

For handwashing fact sheet, visit: [www.weldgov.com](http://www.weldgov.com) (click on **Health Hot Topics**)

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**Health Administration  
Vital Records**

Tele: 970-304-6410

Fax: 970-304-6412

**Public Health &  
Clinical Services**

Tele: 970-304-6420

Fax: 970-304-6416

**Environmental Health  
Services**

Tele: 970-304-6415

Fax: 970-304-6411

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Tele: 970-304-6470

Fax: 970-304-6452

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Tele: 970-304-6470

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