

# Health and Safety Information for Operators of Petting Zoos and Farms



Your petting zoo is designed to provide children and students with the joy of coming close to animals. You must remember, however, that animals can carry diseases that can make humans ill, and proper precautions must be taken to ensure that the health and safety of the children are protected.

For your operation, your health region recommends the following:

## **HANDWASHING:**

- ◆ Staff/volunteers must encourage all visitors to wash their hands after handling the animals.
- ◆ There should be a minimum of two handwashing stations (see back page) with hot/warm water, liquid soap and paper towels immediately adjacent to the petting zoo area.
- ◆ “Hands free” taps and soap dispensers are recommended.
- ◆ Temporary handwashing stations should be installed when permanent facilities are not available (see back page).
- ◆ It is also recommended that in addition to having handwashing stations available, a sanitizing alcohol handwashing gel be available in the petting zoo area for use by staff or visitors.
- ◆ A one-way entrance-exit system is preferred to facilitate handwashing.
- ◆ Handwashing facilities must be accessible by all visitors, i.e. at the right heights for both children and adults or with raised standing areas provided for children (check to ensure set-up does not present tripping or falling hazards).

## **OPERATION:**

- ◆ The public should not be permitted access to any animal enclosure except under the direct supervision of trained personnel. These enclosures should be kept locked outside of regular business hours.
- ◆ Ensure that any manure is quickly and thoroughly cleaned up, and appropriately discarded. Straw and sawdust should be removed daily.
- ◆ At least once daily, ensure that the rails in the petting zoo are washed with clean water and disinfected with a mild solution of bleach (approximately 2 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of water), and that the floors in the petting zoo are thoroughly cleaned.
- ◆ Petting zoo activities must be supervised. As a general rule, for group visits, there should be one supervisor to every eight children between the ages of 4 and 8, and children under 4 should be individually supervised. If supervision levels are less than this, consider disallowing direct contact with the animals for children under eight.
- ◆ Staff/volunteers must report all animal bites or scratches, or other injuries resulting from animal contact to your health region.

## **ANIMALS:**

- ◆ There must not be any carnivorous animals, non-human primates, reptiles or amphibians in the petting area.
- ◆ All animals must have a friendly disposition, and must be comfortable with extensive petting or handling.
- ◆ All animals must be in good health, and any animals with diarrhea must be excluded from display.
- ◆ All animals must have up-to-date vaccinations for diseases applicable to the region. Vaccination records must be readily available when requested by the health region.

## **SIGNS:**

Ensure signs are erected at the entrance of the petting zoo or farm, which should include the following messages:

- ◆ Wash hands with soap and water after touching the animals and dry hands thoroughly.
- ◆ Parents/adults should supervise the childrens' handwashing.
- ◆ Wash hands with soap and water before eating.



- ◆ Avoid touching your face and mouth before washing your hands.
- ◆ DO NOT bring food or drink into the petting zoo or farm.

Signs on handwashing should also be placed in appropriate places (such as eating areas and entrances) reminding visitors to wash their hands when leaving animal contact areas, before eating, and when leaving the farm or zoo.

#### NUMBER OF HANDWASHING SINKS REQUIRED:

Estimate the number of visitors, and provide an appropriate number of handwash basins (e.g. 30 people will leave a contact area every 15 minutes and each person will take 1 minute to wash and dry hands.) The facility will therefore need 2 handwash basins (30 people x 1 minute divided by 15 = 2).

#### TEMPORARY HANDWASHING STATION SET-UP:

Temporary handwashing stations can be set up on-site using a water jug (equipped with a spigot that allows the water to run freely, without having to hold on), a clean chair, a small dishbasin, a five gallon receiving bucket, soap, paper towel and a garbage container. Fill the water jug with hot water, set it on a counter, and then set the dishbasin on a chair located directly beneath the spigot.



There must be an adequate number of handwashing stations.

The procedure for handwashing using this temporary set-up is as follows: Turn the water on, wash hands thoroughly with soap, and then rinse under the running water. The dishbasin is located directly beneath the spigot thereby catching all of the water. Dry hands with paper towels and then empty the dishbasin into the five-gallon bucket. Wipe the dishbasin with the used piece of paper towel before discarding it into the garbage container. The handwashing station is now ready for the next person. (Note: The receiving bucket must be emptied into the sewer system when it becomes full).

Make sure all children wash their hands after leaving the petting zoo or farm, and before they eat.

Relevant information adopted from HSE, UK and Middlesex-London Health Unit.

Compiled by:

- Capital Health
- Aspen Regional Health
- East Central Health

## RECENT OUTBREAKS RELATING TO PETTING ZOOS AND FARMS

#### November 2000:

- ◆ **Worcester, Pennsylvania: 61 children aged one through ten were infected by *E. coli* O157:H7 after visiting a farm. Eight were hospitalized and six developed kidney problems. The source of infection was traced to cows and calves at the farm.**

#### August 2000:

- ◆ **Cleveland, Ohio: 14 cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 infection were traced to a petting zoo at a county fair.**

#### August 1999:

- ◆ **London, Ontario: Up to 159 may have been infected with *E. coli* O157:H7 after visiting a petting zoo operation in an agricultural pavilion.**

#### July 1999:

- ◆ **North Wales, UK: 17 cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 were linked to a farm visit. Six required hospitalization.**

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health Services office.

Edmonton Main Office (780) 413-7928  
Capital Health Centre - South Tower (780) 735-1400  
Strathcona (780) 467-5571

Spruce Grove (780) 962-7509  
Leduc (780) 980-4644  
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