

#16 SAFE ANIMAL CONTACT AT PETTING ZOOS AND FAIRS



Photograph Courtesy of University of California 4-H Archives

People can acquire diseases from or be physically injured by animals. Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates 35 human infectious disease outbreaks associated with animals have occurred since 2001. These types of infectious diseases generally affect the intestinal tract and are primarily transmitted by the fecal-oral route. If animal fur, hair, skin, and saliva become contaminated with fecal matter, direct infectious disease transmission can occur when people touch, pet, feed, or are licked by the animal. Diseases may also be transmitted through ingestion of fecal-contaminated dust. Petting zoos and fairs are places where animal-person contact is high and therefore, risk exists for infectious disease transmission and physical injuries. This Clover Safe presents safe animal contact practices for 4-H participants while at petting zoos or fairs or during other animal handling activities.

Practices for Safe Animal Contact at Petting Zoos and Fairs

- Find where hand-washing stations are located and always wash your hands with soap and water promptly after touching, petting, or holding an animal or touching animal enclosures or food containers. Do not dry your hands on your clothing.
- Do not eat or drink in areas where animals are housed or kept.
- Avoid putting your hands or other objects in your mouth when in animal areas.
- Do not kiss animals.
- Always approach animals within their field of vision. Move at a deliberate and non-aggressive pace toward animals.
- Never poke, pull on, squeeze, yell at, pinch, hit, or tease animals. These behaviors can threaten an animal and cause it to butt, bite, claw, peck, or kick in self defense.
- Assure you have an escape route when you are nearby large animals such as cattle or horses.
- Maintain a safe distance behind a barrier from an animal that is snorting, pawing the ground, growling, baring its teeth, or otherwise appears to be agitated or threatened.
- Be careful around young animals. Do not get between a baby animal and its mother or take a baby animal from its mother.
- If airborne dust is readily visible in an animal holding area, either put on a dust mask or leave the area until airborne dust is reduced or settles.
- Children younger than five years should be closely supervised by an adult when in close proximity to animals.
- Animals should only be fed and watered by their handlers or under the direct supervision of their handlers.
- Always handle animals in a humane fashion.
- If an animal is acting outside its usual behavior pattern, it may be sick and should be evaluated by a veterinarian.
- Promptly report any injuries from animals to your group leader, parent, or guardian. If an injury is serious, seek medical assistance.



Students Demonstrate Good Hand-Washing Technique

Portions of this Clover Safe incorporate information modified from *Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Places, 2006, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, 18 pages. Available online at <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalsInPublicSettings.pdf>.*