



Let the Children Enjoy Your Petting Zoo

A message to Zoo Operators and Farm Owners

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, and so proper precautions must be taken to ensure that the health and safety of the children is protected.

Peace Country Health recommends the following:

SIGNS:

Ensure signs are erected at the entrance of the petting zoo or farm and at any eating areas that include the following messages:

- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching the animals, then dry your hands thoroughly;
- Parents/adults should supervise all children's handwashing
- Wash hands with soap and water before eating
- Avoid touching your face and mouth before washing your hands with soap and water
- NO food or drink is to be brought into the petting zoo or farm

Make sure that all visitors - especially children - wash their hands after leaving the petting zoo or farm, and always wash their hands before eating.

HANDWASHING:

- Staff/volunteers must encourage all visitors to wash their hands after handling the animals.
- There must be a minimum of two handwashing stations with hot/warm water, liquid soap and paper towels immediately adjacent to the petting zoo area.
- Non-hand operable or automatic taps and soap dispensers are recommended.
- Temporary handwashing stations should be installed when a permanent facility is not available (see page 2).
- It is also recommended that sanitizing alcohol gel be present in the petting zoo area for use by staff or visitors [i.e. in addition to, but not replacing, handwashing stations].
- One-way entrance-exit system is preferred to facilitate handwashing.
- Handwashing facilities must be accessible by all visitors (i.e. either at the right heights for both children and adults, or with raised standing areas provided for children; check to ensure setup does not present tripping or falling hazards for children).

OPERATION:

- Public shall not be permitted access to any animal enclosure except under the direct supervision of trained personnel. These enclosures shall be kept locked at all times.
- 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 appropriately disinfected 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. Children under 4 should be individually supervised. If supervision levels are less than this, consider not allowing children under eight any direct contact with the animals.
- Staff/volunteers must report all animal bites or scratches, or other injuries resulting from animal contact, to the regional health authority.

ANIMALS:

- There must not be any carnivorous animals [other than domestic dogs or cats], non-human primates, reptiles or amphibians
- All animals must be in good health. Any animals with diarrhea must be excluded from display
- All animals must have up-to-date vaccinations for diseases applicable to the area (check with local veterinarian). Vaccination records must be readily available when requested by a health officer.
- All animals must have a friendly disposition, and must be comfortable with extensive petting or handling

Handwashing Basins and Temporary Station Requirement

Number of Handwashing basins required:

Estimate number of visitors in any given amount of time. Allow one minute per person per handwash basin to wash and dry their hands.

For example: suppose you estimate that 30 people will visit your petting zoo every 15 minutes.

30 people per 15 minutes x 1 minute per person per basin = 2 handwash basins required

Temporary Handwashing station set-up:

Temporary handwashing stations can be set up on-site using a water jug equipped with a tap [tap should allow the water to run freely without having to hold it “on”], a clean chair, a small basin, a large receiving bucket, and a garbage container.

The procedure for handwashing using this temporary set-up is as follows:

- Fill the water jug with hot water, set it on the chair on a counter, and then set the basin directly beneath the tap
- Turn the water “on”, wash hands thoroughly with soap, and then rinse under running water
- While still holding the paper towel, use the paper towel to turn the tap “off”
- Empty the basin into the receiving bucket
- Wipe the basin with the used paper towel before discarding the towel into the garbage
- Empty the receiving bucket into the sewer system when it becomes full

For more information contact a Public Health Inspector at any of the Public Health Centres listed below.

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