



Petting Zoo's Visitors Guide

Petting zoos – and any events that encourage human-animal interaction – can lead to the transmission of infectious disease. Prior to visiting these types of events, it is a good idea to call the petting zoo or other venue first to inquire about the topics listed below. Remember to always wash your hands prior to and after entering the animal contact area. Never eat, drink, or engage in any activities that would facilitate the transmission of pathogens to the mouth within the animal contact area (i.e., smoking, biting your nails, touching your mouth with your hands).

Lower-risk animals – better choice for animal contact

- Adult goats, sheep, cattle and ponies
- Adult dogs
- Adult cats
- Adult rabbits

Higher-risk animals – avoid animal contact

- Juvenile animals – goats (kids), sheep (lambs), cattle (calves), ponies (foals), dogs (puppies), cats (kittens)
- Reptiles – e.g., turtles, snakes, lizards
- Amphibians – e.g., frogs, toads, salamanders
- Poultry – e.g., chicks, chickens, ducklings, ducks
- Raccoons, skunks, bats – due to risk of rabies transmission

Ideally animal contact areas should have, or be designed, with the following

- Separate visitor entrance and exit
- Design requiring one-way traffic
- Transition zones at entrance and exit
- Separate service access point
- Petting pens holding animals (restricted access to visitors)
- Gates or fences over/through which petting and feeding are allowed – preferably no feeding is allowed
- Distinct visitor walkways not accessed by animals, or used to transport animal bedding or animal food
- Isolation from non-animal areas – preferably enclosed by double fencing
- Prohibition for visitors to eat or drink within its boundaries

Staff members

- Present at entrance, exit, and within animal contact area
- Keep area clean
- Remind visitors of risky behaviors to avoid
- Remind visitors to wash hands upon exiting
- Enforce event's or venue's guidelines and rules

Entrance transition zone has

- Handwashing station with sufficient stream of running water, soap, and paper towels
- Signage listing risky behaviors to avoid
- Signage encouraging handwashing
- Staff member encouraging safe behaviors, handwashing, and informing visitors of risks involved with human-animal interactions

Exit transition zone has

- Handwashing station with sufficient stream of running water, soap, and paper towels; signage; and staff member encouraging hand hygiene

Sanitation

- Area cleaned and sanitized daily (or immediately after becoming grossly contaminated)
- Animals kept clean
- Urine and feces promptly removed



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Planning on attending a petting zoo, or bringing a group of visitors with you? Listed below are the most commonly observed risky behaviors, and the ones that you and everyone visiting the petting zoo should avoid. If you are leading the group, take a few minutes prior to your visit to explain to your group why this is important.

Risky behaviors to avoid during a human-animal interaction

- Hand-to-mouth contact
- Hand-to-face contact
- Kissing animals
- Letting animals lick your hands or face
- Contact with any animal's hind end – risk of infection and physical injury
- Direct contact with animal bedding, particularly if it is grossly contaminated with feces or urine
- Eating, drinking or smoking within animal areas
- Use of any other item that goes in the mouth (e.g., bottles, sippy cups, pacifiers, toys, etc.)

How to approach animals within animal contact area

- Approach animals from front and sides where the animals can see you; never from behind
- Never corner an animal
- Only pet animals on neck and back, avoiding areas near the mouth and hind end of the animal to avoid bite and kick injuries
- Always speak with a low, calm voice, and avoid making loud, sudden noises and movement that might scare animals
- Never insert hands or arms into an animal's pen, as they may become lodged between the animal and pen, causing injury
- If feeding is allowed, always do so with a flat hand, where all fingers are extended and kept tightly together side by side
- Under no circumstance should anyone pull or push an animal, or any part of an animal (e.g., ears, wool)



For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/features/animalexhibits and don't forget to wash your hands!