

Checklist for Petting Zoo Operators: Zoonotic Disease Prevention

For petting zoo operators: Use this checklist as a tool for the design and operation of your animal exhibit in a manner that is safe for animals and visitors alike.

For those selecting a petting zoo to hire: Use this checklist to evaluate potential petting zoo vendors.

- These best practices are based on the 2013 Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings (nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalContactCompendium2013)

Facility Design

- Handwashing stations
 - Running water
 - Accessible for children and persons with disabilities
 - Plan in place for restocking paper towels, soap, and water
- Hand sanitizer (should only be used when soap and water for handwashing is not available. Sanitizer is not effective against some potentially harmful germs)
 - Plan in place for restocking sanitizer
- Petting of animals only allowed over/through barriers (fences); visitors not allowed into pens
- No transport of manure/soiled bedding through public areas
- Transition area at entrance between non-animal and animal areas
 - Stroller and bag storage
- Transition area at exit as people leave animal space to non-animal space
 - Hand washing stations positioned near exit so visitors can't miss them

Visitor Education

- Signage in transition area at entrance
 - Animals can carry germs that can make people sick
 - No food or drink allowed in animal areas
 - No hand-to-mouth activities in the animal area (drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
 - Children under 5-years old, senior citizens, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions or a weakened immune system should be extra careful around animals
- Signage in transition area at exit
 - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after visiting the animals
- Staff members present to educate visitors that:

- Animals can carry germs that make people sick
- There are things we can do - or not do - to make sure we don't catch those germs
- Staff members present to encourage safe animal contact:
 - Remind visitors to refrain from hand-to-mouth activities in the animal area (drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
 - Remind parents to supervise children with the animals
 - Remind visitors to wash their hands after visiting the animal area

Staff Education

- Review best practices and recommendations from the Compendium (mentioned above) annually
 - Educate staff about the risk for disease and injury associated with animals
 - Educate staff on how diseases are transmitted from animals to people
 - Educate staff on prevention messages that should be shared with visitors
- Ensure staff feel comfortable explaining these concepts to visitors
- Explain staff members' role(s) in the petting zoo
 - Teach people about animals
 - Teach people how to enjoy animals safely by following these best practices

Animal Care and Management

- Animals that have diarrhea, otherwise sick or injured are immediately removed from the exhibit
- Manure/soiled bedding removed promptly
 - Limit visitor contact with manure/soiled bedding through use of double barriers, sweeping up walkways, use of solid bottom fencing, etc.
- Surfaces that contact both animals and people (pen dividers) are cleaned at least daily with soap and water
- Animals housed appropriately for their space (not crowded), minimizing stress and pathogen shedding in their feces)

For further consultation or questions contact: Dr. Russ Daly, DVM, South Dakota State Public Health Veterinarian at russell.daly@sdstate.edu or 605-688-6589.

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