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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