



Facts You Need to Know

Animal Contact in Public Settings

Minnesotans of all ages have many opportunities to have contact with animals in public settings, such as petting zoos, fairs and farm tours. These opportunities provide entertainment and education about animals and animal husbandry. These human-animal contacts have a number of risks involved.

Groups at high-risk for serious infection include children less than 5 years of age, the elderly, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems. The behaviors and actions of people are significantly related to the risk of infection. Among these are inadequate hand washing, large numbers of children among attendees, a lack of close supervision of children, hand-to-mouth activities, (e.g. smoking, eating, use of pacifiers, bottles, sippy cups and thumb sucking) in the animal area, and a lack of education and awareness of the risk.

The primary way transmission occurs is the fecal oral route. Since animal fur, hair, skin and saliva can become contaminated with fecal organisms, **transmission may occur when people pet, touch, or are licked by animals.**

Recommendations for Animal Areas:

- **Food and Beverages** – No food and beverages should be allowed in animal areas. In addition smoking, carrying toys and use of pacifiers, baby bottles and sippy cups should not be permitted in animal areas.
- **Cleaning** – Manure and soiled animal bedding should be removed promptly and stored in designated containers. It should not be transported or removed through public viewing and contact areas.
- **Supervision of Children** - For all children animal contact should be carefully supervised to discourage hand-to-mouth contact and to insure hand washing.
- **Volunteers/Owners/Workers/Supervisors** – Responsible person(s) must be present in animal contact areas at all times.
- **Feeding animals** – If feeding animals is permitted, only food sold by the venue for that purpose should be allowed. Food sold should not be provided in containers that can be eaten by people such as ice cream cones.