

# GUIDELINES FOR OPERATORS OF **ANIMAL EXHIBITS,** **PETTING ZOOS & MORE**



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## OVERVIEW

This booklet, developed by Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit (HNHU), is intended to provide operators with some recommendations to help you run your event in a way that reduces the risk of illness among animals and visitors. Operators are also required to notify the health unit of their event. It includes key recommendations from the *Recommendation to Prevent Diseases and Injury Associated with Petting Zoos in Ontario* (MOHLTC, 2011).

A main public health concern with running animal exhibits (i.e. petting zoos, animal rides, animal exhibits or open farms) is the spread of infectious diseases such as rabies, E. coli O157:H7, among others, from animals to humans. Rabies is a virus that can be transmitted to humans through the saliva of an infected animal. The transmission typically occurs via a bite, however, a scratch or contact with mucous membranes are other ways in which the virus can be transmitted. Once symptoms begin to present themselves, the disease is almost always fatal. Rabies can be prevented through vaccinations prior to exposure or promptly after.

E. coli O157:H7 is caused by bacteria that can be found in animal feces. It can be transmitted to humans who have contact with infected feces, either directly or indirectly. If untreated, this bacteria can lead to a serious illness in humans known as Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) or even death.



## PROTECTING ANIMAL HEALTH

In order to prevent the spread of diseases all exhibit animals should:

- Be vaccinated against rabies, if applicable. Unvaccinated mammals should be vaccinated at least one month prior to the event.
- Have up to-date vaccination/health certificates, signed by a licensed veterinarian, available upon request by public health inspectors.
- Be monitored for signs of illness daily. Animals that test positive for an infectious disease should be removed from the event and isolated from all other animals and humans.
- Incidents such as bites and scratches where human skin is broken due to contact with an animal must, by law, be reported to the HNHU immediately.
- Animals that are too young to be vaccinated against rabies must not be allowed contact with any patrons. They can be showcased if restrictive measures are taken.



**Tip:**  
**It is recommended that all animal handlers are vaccinated against rabies as well.**

# PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

## Location

- Maintain proper visitor flow with clearly designated entrances and exits to the animal area to avoid overcrowding.
- Ensure there are barriers and signs to prevent people from touching any animals they should not come into contact with.
- Ensure that the animal exhibit is clearly separated from any food services at the event.

## Food & Drink

- Restrict public access to animal feed and water (except those supplied specifically for visitors to feed to the animals).
- Ensure that food given to animals is not held in receptacles that can be eaten by humans.
- Do not provide the public with unpasteurized milk, milk products or ungraded hen eggs.

## Ensure the drinking water for animals is safe.

- Ensure manure is not stored close to water sources to prevent contamination.
- Install back-flow prevention devices on all faucet/hose connections and between livestock area outlets and other water lines.
- Label hoses accessible by the public as: “Not fit for human drinking”.



# PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

## Handwashing

- At least one hand hygiene station that is accessible to children and persons with disabilities (with liquid soap, potable running water, single use paper towels or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) should be located at the exit of the petting zoo area and restocked regularly.
- The HNHU also recommends having fully stocked handwashing stations at the entrance(s) and exit(s) of the food areas.
- Ensure universal signs like the one below are posted with reminders to wash hands at exits from animal areas and in non-animal areas where food is served and consumed.
- Encourage visitors not to eat, drink, smoke, vape, or place their fingers in their mouth until they have left all animal areas to wash their hands immediately after leaving.

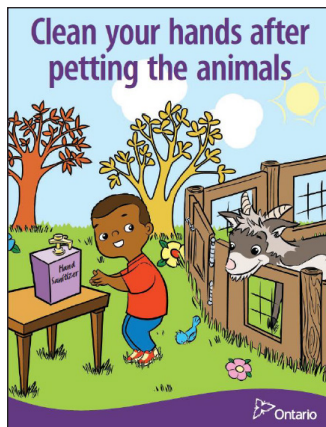


Figure 1: Reproduced from the Recommendations to Prevent Disease and Injury Associated with Petting Zoos in Ontario (2011).

# PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH

## Injury Prevention

- Ensure first aid facilities are well stocked and conveniently located to staff and the public.
- Where personal protective equipment (such as helmets) are required, ensure that the equipment is maintained in sanitary and good condition.
- Develop a process for dealing with ill, injured or distressed animals.
- Ill or injured animals should be placed in a separate and restricted area. Appropriate veterinary care must also be provided.
- Ensure animals are individually identifiable to the public and staff (e.g. ear tag or collars).

## Personal Items

- Instruct visitors not to take strollers, wheelchairs, food, beverages (including water bottles), toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups (sippy-cups), and baby bottles into animal areas.



## CLEANING

### **Petting zoo operators and staff should:**

- Ensure that personal protective equipment is used when cleaning.
- Staff should practice proper hand hygiene after cleaning (Refer to Page 4).
- Promptly remove manure and avoid transporting manure or soiled bedding through non-animal areas.
- Clean all surfaces thoroughly, with soap and water to remove organic matter before disinfection.
- Clean, rinse and disinfect animal areas (e.g., flooring and rails) **at least once daily**. Disinfectants should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Examples: bleach or quaternary ammonium.
- When disinfection is not possible (i.e., wooden rails, outdoor exhibits with natural flooring or during freezing weather), remove fresh organic material regularly to prevent build-up.

### **Keep visitors away from:**

- Wastewater runoff, animal waste and manure storage areas.
- Animal birthing area and by-products.
- Animal areas that are being cleaned and disinfected.
- Tools used for cleaning, disinfection and waste removal.



# CONTACT US

## Thinking of Having an Animal Exhibit at Your Event?

Remember to fill out and submit the Special Event Animal Exhibit Application Form **within 30 days** of your event. The form can be found on our website or you can request one by emailing [specialevents@hnhss.ca](mailto:specialevents@hnhss.ca).

## Have Any Questions?

Refer to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Recommendations to *Prevent Disease and Injury Associated with Petting Zoos in Ontario* for more detailed information about running an event with animals.

To reach a public health inspector, please call the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit at 519-426-6170 or 905-318-6623.

