



CLOVER SAFE

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



#17

ORGANIZING AND OPERATING A SAFE PETTING ZOO EVENT

This Clover Safe note is intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and staff.



People can acquire diseases from or be physically injured by animals. Because petting zoos are places where animal-human contact is intended to be high, controls must be established to prevent disease transmission and physical injuries. Infectious diseases are primarily transmitted from animals to humans by the fecal-oral route. Animal fur, hair, skin, and/or saliva that is contaminated with infectious fecal matter can be transferred to people when they touch, pet, feed, or are licked by an animal. Ingesting fecal-contaminated dust can also result in transmission of infectious diseases. Humans may be physically injured when bitten, clawed, pecked, butted, or kicked by animals. This Clover Safe describes controls for the prevention of disease transmission or physical injuries at petting zoos.

Hand Washing Stations

- Medical authorities consider hand washing to be the best method for the prevention of disease transmission. Therefore, hand washing stations should be located outside the exit(s) of areas where animal interactions take place. All persons that enter an area where animal interactions take place should wash their hands upon exiting the area.
- Hand washing stations can be rented from portable restroom businesses, should be foot operated, and must have soap and single use paper towel dispensers. Soap and towel supplies should be sufficient for the maximum anticipated event attendance.
- Hand washing stations should be readily accessible to children and adults.
- Hand washing stations should be located near food concessions at any animal showing event.
- Signs should be posted at entrances and exits to animal interaction and concession areas to remind attendees to wash their hands after exiting the petting zoo area or at any time prior to eating or drinking.
- Adults should supervise hand washing for children five years or younger.



Animal Control and Care

- Maintain strict control over attendee access to animals. Use barriers to prevent children and adults from uncontrolled entry into animal holding areas.
- Children and adults should be cautioned not to kiss, feed, poke, pull on, squeeze, yell at, pinch, hit, or tease animals. They should be encouraged to treat animals humanely.
- Prevent attendees from contacting animal bedding, food, water, and manure. Discourage attendees from touching posts and cross bars of animal pens and corrals. Children should also be restricted from standing or crawling on animal pens and corrals.
- Animal pens and cages should be frequently cleaned of manure and bedding should be replaced daily.
- Remove any sick animal(s) from the animal interaction area.
- Animals should be excluded from and animal interaction areas should be separated from eating areas.

Attendee Education

Attendees should be informed using postings, handouts, or other methods of the following safety practices:

- Disease transmission from animals to humans is through the fecal-oral route and that hand washing is an effective method for preventing disease transmission after contact with animals or their enclosures.
- Use towels provided at hand washing stations to dry your hands. Do not dry your hands on your clothes.
- Not to eat or drink in animal interaction areas.
- Keep young children's toys, pacifiers, and blankets outside of animal interaction areas.
- Hand sanitizers are not as effective as hand washing and should not be substituted for hand washing. Hand sanitizers should only be used in conjunction with hand washing.

Posters describing hand washing and other appropriate safe practices are available on the ANR EH&S website at:

http://safety.ucanr.org/4H/Petting_Zoos.htm

Portions of this Clover Safe incorporate information modified from *Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Places, 2006, National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, 18 pages. Additional safety information provided by Carla Sousa, 4-H Development Advisor, Tulare County Cooperative Extension.*