

GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF PETTING ZOOS & OPEN FARMS

The purpose of *The Public Health Act* is to protect and promote the health and well-being of the people of Manitoba by reducing the risk of illness, injury and premature death.

Petting Zoos and Open Farms are intended to provide children and students with the joy and experience of close exposures to animals. However, animals can carry diseases that make humans ill and proper precautions must be taken to ensure the health and safety of all visitors is protected – especially children.

The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that petting zoos are designed, operated and maintained in a sanitary manner to ensure that it does not pose a risk to Public Health.

This is a guideline only. Additional items may be required by the Medical Officer of Health and/or Public Health Inspector pursuant to the *Health Hazards Regulation* under *The Public Health Act*.

GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF PETTING ZOOS & OPEN FARMS

A Public Health Message to Operators of Temporary Petting Zoos or Open Farms

Your petting zoo or farm is designed to provide children and students with the joy of close exposures to animals. You must remember, however, animals can carry diseases that can make humans ill, and proper precautions must be taken to ensure that the health and safety of all visitors are protected, especially children. For your operation, Manitoba Health recommends the following:



1.0 DESIGN:

- The petting zoo should be in an enclosed area to limit the number of entrances and exits
- A barrier should be provided between the public and the animals
- An area inaccessible to the public should be available for the storage of animal manure/droppings, used bedding, and the equipment used for pen cleaning
- An adequate number of hand wash stations must be available at ALL possible exit sites
- Food service & eating areas must be separate from the petting zoo area
- Suitable signs must be posted to clearly define each area noted above

2.0 HAND WASHING:

- Staff/Volunteers must encourage all visitors to wash their hands after handling the animals and before consuming food or drinks.
- There should be a minimum of one or more hand washing *stations* equipped with hot/warm water, liquid soap and paper towels located immediately adjacent to the animal petting area
- Additional hand washing stations are recommended to be placed at ALL exits from the petting zoo area (*see Page 4 calculations to determine capacity required based on number of visitors*).

- The use of antiseptic hand wipes or alcohol gels are NOT a replacement for providing hand wash sinks as they have limited effectiveness against certain disease-causing germs.
- Automatic taps are recommended. Hand soap and paper towels should be in dispensers.
- Temporary hand wash stations should be installed when permanent facilities are not immediately available (see back page).
- The exit to the animal area should be controlled to ensure children pass by and use the hand washing facilities.
- Hand washing facilities must be accessible by all visitors, i.e. at the right heights for both children and adults or with raised standing areas provided for children (*check to ensure setup does not present tripping or falling hazard*).
- Signage outlining proper hand washing techniques should be placed at all hand washing stations

3.0 OPERATION:

- The public should not be permitted access to any animal enclosure except under the direct supervision of trained personnel. These enclosures should be kept locked outside of regular business hours.
- Ensure that any manure is quickly and thoroughly cleaned up, and appropriately discarded. Straw bedding, and/or sawdust should be replaced at least daily.
- Staff/Volunteers must report all animal bites or scratches, or other injuries resulting from animal contact to their regional health authority or local Public Health Inspector.
- Unpasteurized milk, dairy products or juices are NOT to be offered to any visitors
- Staff/Volunteers should monitor animals for lesions, illness, and aggressive behaviour during operational hours
- Staff/Volunteers should remind people to avoid kissing the animals, touching their mouths while at the petting zoo, and to wash hands before exiting the petting zoo.

4.0 ANIMALS:

- Potentially dangerous animals should not be included in a petting zoo. Reptiles and amphibians are not recommended.
- All animals must be in good health, and any animals with diarrhea must be excluded from display immediately.
- All animals must have up-to-date vaccinations for diseases applicable to the region. Vaccination records must be readily available when requested by the Public Health Inspector.
- All animals must have a friendly disposition, and must be comfortable with extensive petting or handling.

5.0 SIGNAGE:

Ensure signs are located at the entrance of the petting zoo or farm, which should include the following safety messages:

- ◆ **Wash hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly:**
 - ◆ **After touching the animals or other items in the petting zoo area and**
 - ◆ **Anytime your hands get visibly soiled or dirty**
 - ◆ **Before having any food or drinks**
- ◆ **Parents/Adults should supervise the children's hand washing.**
- ◆ **Avoid touching your face and mouth before washing your hands.**
- ◆ **NO food or drink is to be brought into the animal contact area.**

Hand washing signs should also be placed in appropriate places (*such as eating areas, entrances and exits*) reminding visitors to wash their hands when leaving animal contact areas, before eating, and when leaving the farm or zoo.

6.0 HAND WASHING SINKS & TEMPORARY HANDWASH STATIONS

Number of Hand washing Sinks Required:

Estimate the number of visitors in the petting zoo at peak hours of operation and the average time they spend in the exhibit area. To calculate the number of basins required, use the following math example: 30 people leave a petting zoo area every 15 minutes and each person takes 1 minute to wash & dry hands. The facility will therefore need 2 hand wash basins based on the following calculation:

$$30 \text{ people} \times 1 \text{ minute} \text{ divided by } 15 \text{ minutes} = \mathbf{2 \text{ hand basins.}}$$

Temporary Hand washing Station Setup:

Temporary hand washing stations can be set up on-site using a water jug (*equipped with a spigot that allows the water to run free, without having to hold open*), a clean chair, a small dish basin, a five-gallon receiving bucket and a garbage container. Fill the water jug with hot water, set it on the chair on a counter, and then set the basin directly beneath the spigot.

The procedure for hand washing using this temporary set-up is as follows: turn the water on, wash hands thoroughly with soap, and then rinse under the running water. The dish basin is located directly beneath the spigot hereby catching all of the water. Dry hands with paper towels and then empty the dish basin into the five-gallon bucket. Wipe the dish basin with the used piece of paper towel before discarding it into the garbage container. The hand washing station is now ready for the next person. (**Note:** *The receiving bucket must be emptied into an approved sewage disposal system or sewer when it becomes full*).

A "Self-Inspection Checklist" is provided on Pages 7 & 8 of this guideline to assist operators in planning a safe and health operation. If you have any further questions regarding petting zoos and open farms please contact your local Public Health Inspector.

For phone listings please check the blue pages under "Health" in your local phone directory or visit:

manitoba.ca/healthprotection



- ✓ **There must be an adequate number of hand washing stations**
- ✓ **Make sure all children wash their hands after leaving the petting zoo or farm, and before they eat**

RECENT OUTBREAKS RELATING TO PETTING ZOOS & OPEN FARMS

April 2012

Brandon, Manitoba: 11 confirmed cases of 'Crypto' (*C. parvum*) associated with infected goats at a large-scale petting zoo at a fair.

July 2005

Arizona: 2 children hospitalized with *E. coli* 0157:H7 illness associated with a visit to a petting zoo.

March 2005

Florida: 63 cases (mainly young children) of *E. coli* 0157:H7 associated with petting zoos at three regional fairs. The petting zoos at each fair had the same operator. Seventeen of the cases required hospitalization

October 2004

North Carolina: 108 cases (mainly young children) of *E. coli* 0157: H7 were identified in an outbreak associated with visiting two petting zoos at a state fair. Twenty cases required hospitalization.

October 2003

Surrey, British Columbia: 44 cases of *E. coli* 0157:H7 associated with visits by school groups and families to a farm petting zoo.

References:

1. Alberta Health Services. (2011). *Petting Zoo, Animal Attraction and Farm Visits – Information for Operators*.
2. Fraser Health. (2006). *Let Children Safely Enjoy Your Petting Zoo or Farm*.
3. Weese, J.S. et al. 2011. Observation of Practices at Petting Zoos and the Potential Impact on Zoonotic Disease Transmission. *CID Oxford Journals* 2007:45 (July):10-15.



Petting Zoo & Open Farm – Self-Inspection Checklist:

HAND WASHING/HAND WASHING STATION

- **Are there an adequate number of hand wash stations based on the recommendations on page 4 of the guidelines?**.....YES/NO How many? _____

- **Are the sinks properly equipped with:**
 - Running water?..... YES/NO
 - Liquid soap in dispensers?..... YES/NO
 - Paper towel in dispensers?..... YES/NO
 - Garbage Receptacles?..... YES/NO

- **Are the sinks accessible and convenient for:**
 - Small children?..... YES/NO
 - Persons with disabilities?..... YES/NO
 - Other adults?..... YES/NO

- **Are there hand wash stations located at/near:**
 - All exits from petting zoo area?..... YES/NO
 - Food Service/Eating areas?..... YES/NO
 - Washroom/Portable Outhouses..... YES/NO

OPERATION

- **Is there a barrier provided between the animals and the attendees?**..... YES/NO
- **Is there a procedure/person in place to have manure removed promptly?**..... YES/NO
- **Is there a storage place for manure that is inaccessible to visitors?**..... YES/NO
- **Is bedding (i.e. straw, sawdust, etc.) changed daily?**..... YES/NO
- **Is there trained staff to supervise the petting zoo at all times?**..... YES/NO
- **Do staff:**
 - Remind visitors to not kiss the animals?..... YES/NO
 - Remind visitors to not touch their mouths while in the animal area?..... YES/NO
 - Remind visitors to not eat/drink/chew gum in the animal area?..... YES/NO
 - Remind visitors to wash their hands after leaving the animal area?..... YES/NO
- **Are all foods (i.e. milk, juice, cider) offered for sale pasteurized?**..... YES/NO
- **Are all foods (i.e. meat, dairy, eggs) from an approved source?**..... YES/NO
- **Are all eating areas located outside the petting zoo?**..... YES/NO

ANIMALS

- **Are the animals clean?**..... YES/NO
- **Are all of the animals well tempered/comfortable in exhibit?**..... YES/NO
- **Are the animals free of lesions/illness and/or disease?**..... YES/NO
- **Are all animals up to date with vaccines/shots applicable in the area?**..... YES/NO
- **Have exotic pets been approved by public health inspectors?**..... YES/NO

SIGNAGE

- **Are there hand wash signs posted at:**
 - Every entrance and exit to the animal area?..... YES/NO
 - At all hand washing stations?..... YES/NO
 - In washrooms? YES/NO
 - At the entrance to the food service/eating area? YES/NO
- **Do the hand wash signs explain proper hand washing procedures?** YES/NO
- **Are there signs regarding the safe handling of animals?**..... YES/NO
- **Are the “Do not eat or drink!” signs located at entrances to animal area?**..... YES/NO