



## Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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### Staying Healthy at Animal Exhibits and Fairs this Summer

The various summertime fairs around Michigan, including the Barry and Eaton County Fairs, offer many ways to explore the animal world. Exhibits such as petting zoos and fairs allow children of all ages to have a thrilling face-to-face experience with animals. This interaction allows children and adults to learn more about animals and helps to build an important human-animal bond.

Unfortunately, many people become sick every year because of a visit to an animal exhibit. It is important to remember that animals sometimes carry germs that are harmful to humans. When people forget to wash their hands after petting an animal, or bring food or drinks into an area where animals are exhibited, they are at risk for becoming ill.

The first germ to be aware of at summer animal exhibits is novel influenza (flu), which is a virus that can be spread from pigs or poultry (like chickens and turkeys) to people. This happens when someone comes into contact with the droplets from an animal's cough or sneeze, or by touching a surface that has those droplets on it and then touching their own nose or mouth.

The second group of germs to know about is germs that cause gastrointestinal diseases, such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, which can infect a person's stomach and intestines. The most common way for someone to become infected with these germs at animal exhibits is by touching animals or nearby surfaces that have been contaminated by feces (poop) and then eating or touching their face with their hands.

Stay healthy this summer! Below are tips to help prevent illness when visiting animal exhibits:

#### Wash Your Hands Often

- Find out where hand washing stations are located.
- Always wash your hands right after petting animals or touching the animal pens or fences.
- Always wash your hands upon exiting animal areas (even if you did not touch an animal), after using the restroom, before eating and drinking, before preparing food or drinks, and after removing soiled clothes or shoes.
- Use running water and soap for the best protection. Use hand sanitizers if running water and soap are not available. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water as soon as a sink is available.

#### Eat and Drink Safely

- Keep food and drinks out of animal areas.
- Do not share human food with animals.
- Food should be prepared, served, and eaten only in areas where animals are not permitted.
- Do not eat or drink raw (unpasteurized) products, including milk, cheeses, and cider or juices.
- Individuals should wash their hands before preparing food or drinks and before eating and drinking.

#### Keep Children Safe around Animals

- Children younger than 5 years of age always need adult supervision in animal areas.

- Never allow children to put their thumbs, fingers, or objects (for example, pacifiers or sippy cups) in their mouth while interacting with animals.
- Supervise hand washing.
- Do not take or use strollers, bottles, pacifiers, spill-proof cups, or toys in animal areas or barns.
- Children under 5 years of age, elderly persons, pregnant women, and persons with weakened immune systems should use extra precautions when around animal exhibits.

People who attend an animal exhibit and later become ill, with either flu-like symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, and/or tiredness or with gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea, especially with a fever or bloody stools, should contact their doctor. Be sure to let the doctor know about any recent contact with animals. Most animal-related illnesses would appear within one week after animal contact.

For more information on how to keep people and pets healthy, including information for those who should take extra precautions, visit the CDC's Healthy Pets Healthy People website at [www.cdc.gov/healthypets/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/) or call the Barry-Eaton District Health Department at (269) 798-4152 in Barry County or (517) 541-2641 in Eaton County.