

Visiting Animals in Public Places (Fairs, Petting Zoos, Farms)

Visiting animals in public places can be a fun learning experience, however, people can become very sick from diseases that can spread from animals to people if some precautions are not followed.

How diseases spread from animals to people

Animals carry disease-causing germs and can pass them to people through their feces. Animals carrying disease often have no signs of being sick and can continue to release or shed germs into the environment.

Disease outbreaks in public places have been linked to the following animals

- Cows
- Calves
- Goats
- Sheep
- Pigs
- Rodents
- Live poultry
- Reptiles (turtles, lizards and snakes)
- Amphibians (frogs and toads)

Certain diseases may be more common in young animals as they tend to shed more disease-causing germs than adult animals.

Anyone experiencing symptoms within a month following a visit to where there are animals in a public place should seek medical attention.

Some diseases that are commonly spread from animals to people

- E.coli
- Salmonella
- Cryptosporidium
- Campylobacter
- Ringworm
- Rabies

Possible symptoms of diseases spread from animals to people

- Diarrhea
- Bloody diarrhea
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea
- Stomach cramps
- Vomiting

People at higher risk of becoming sick

- Infants under one-year old
- Persons with weakened immune systems such as the elderly and pregnant women

It is recommended that these persons avoid contact with animals in public settings. Children should be closely supervised by an adult in the presence of animals.



1-800-361-5653

TTY (for those with hearing disabilities) **1-866-252-9933**

York Region Health Connection

Community and Health Services

Public Health

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Hand hygiene — the key to prevention

Improper hand hygiene is one of the main causes of disease outbreaks associated with animals in public places. Correct hand hygiene is the single most effective way to reduce the spread of disease.

Review correct hand-hygiene procedures with children, parents and adult supervisors:

Correct handwashing procedures

1. Wet hands
2. Soap
3. Lather
(minimum 15 sec.)
4. Rinse
5. Towel dry
6. Turn off taps

Correct hand-sanitizer procedures

1. Apply one squirt
2. Rub hands together
3. Rub until dry

Washing hands with liquid soap and water is the best way to reduce germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Sanitizers do not eliminate ALL types of germs — always wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible after being in animal areas.

Before your visit

If you are arranging to visit animals in a public place, make sure you have an appropriate amount of adult supervisors, including parents and staff.

Determine if the facility you are visiting has:

- Handwashing facilities available and accessible to both children and adults
- Running water, liquid soap, paper towels or hand sanitizer
- Adequate staff supervising in the areas where animal contact is permitted
- An eating area that is separate from the animal area

During your visit

Practice good hand hygiene:

- After touching or feeding an animal
- After touching an animal's environment (barriers, pens)
- Immediately upon leaving animal areas
- Before eating or drinking
- After removing soiled boots, shoes or clothing
- After using the toilet

General tips

- Do not take strollers, food, drinks, toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups (sippy-cups) and baby bottles into animal areas
- Discourage kissing the animals or wiping hands on clothing
- Discourage hand-to-mouth activities while in animal areas (thumb-sucking, use of pacifiers, mouthed toys, water bottles, smoking, eating, drinking)
- Ensure there are an appropriate number of adult supervisors to keep a close eye on children
- Eat before your visit
- Hand wipes cannot be used in place of handwashing as they may not kill disease-causing germs

Anyone who has been injured (biting or scratching that break a person's skin) by an animal is advised to immediately report the incident to the venue operator and York Region Public Health and visit their doctor as soon as possible.



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