



Mendocino County Health & Human Services Agency
Healthy People, Healthy Communities
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Press Release

Not for op-ed

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stay Healthy at Animal Exhibits

Interacting with animals at fairs, educational farms, petting zoos, summer camps, aquariums, schools, and other places can be educational and fun, and helps people learn about and experience animals they may not see in their daily lives. However, it is important to know that animals sometimes carry germs that can make people sick, including E. Coli and salmonella. Every year, people become ill after contact with animals at animal exhibits, such as petting zoos and fairs.

From 2010-2015, the CDC said about 100 outbreaks were reported linked to animals in public settings like fairs, zoos, and farms. As of July 5, 2019, seven (7) children (ages 2 to 13) with confirmed or probable Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) infection were reported to San Diego County; all 7 had attended the San Diego Fair with attendance and contact with animals as the only commonality. Two patients were hospitalized with one subsequent death.

As the fair season approaches, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and Mendocino County Public Health would like to advise fair goers to follow prevention steps when visiting such exhibits and practice safe hygiene at petting zoos and around animals.

If interacting with animals, for such as feeding, holding, petting or touching exhibit areas, guests should wash their hands afterward. Even if visitors don't interact with any animals, germs can still be spread from surfaces around exhibits.

It is important to follow these prevention steps when visiting animal exhibits:

Wash your Hands

- Find where the handwashing stations are located.

- Wash your hands right after touching animals or anything in the areas where they live, roam, or eat.
- Wash your hands when you leave animal areas, even if you didn't touch the animals; hands should still be washed if you wore gloves.
- Running water and soap are best, but if they are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and wash your hands with soap and running water as soon as you can.

Keep food and animals separate

- Don't eat or drink around animals, and keep food and drinks away from animal areas.
- Don't share your food with the animals, even if you think the food is part of the animal's regular diet. Animals should eat the food provided for them by the animal exhibit.

Keep children safe around animals

- **Always** supervise children around animals.
- Leave items such as strollers, pacifiers, cups, or toys outside the exhibit.
- Don't let children place their mouths on animals or put any objects such as thumbs, fingers, or objects (like pacifiers) in their mouths when they're around animals or in an animal area.
- Always wash children's hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching, feeding, or caring for animals or cleaning their habitats. Adults should supervise handwashing for young children.
- Don't let children sit or play on the ground in animal areas.

For more information go to the CDC website @ www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/stay-healthy-animal-exhibits.html

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