

Petting Zoos

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

A petting zoo can be a fun event; however, an event like this does raise some biosafety concerns. In the past, disease outbreaks associated with petting zoos have involved exotic (e.g., bears) as well as domestic animals. The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) has published a guidance paper on measures to prevent disease associated with animals in public settings: <http://nasphv.org/documentsCompendiumAnimals.html>

Sponsors of petting zoos should review this document and follow these specified actions:

- The animals must be handled in such a way as to avoid animal bites.
- Animals must be caged or controlled when not under the direct supervision of the owner.
- Animal waste must be disposed of promptly and in accordance with local regulations.
- Adequate food and potable water must be available for the animals.
- Have a first aid kit at the event.
- **Domestic animals only - NO EXOTIC ANIMALS.**
- The Animal Exhibit Safety sign should be posted in the exhibit area of your event: <http://nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalExhibitsSafety.pdf>
- Design the venue with safety in mind by having designated animal areas, non-animal areas, and transition areas as described in the *Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2007*.
- Do not permit animals, except service animals, in non-animal areas.
- Assign trained staff to monitor animal contact areas. Exclude food and beverages, toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups, and baby bottles and prohibit smoking.
- Keep the animal areas clean and disinfected to the extent possible and limit visitor contact with manure and animal bedding.
- Allow feeding of animals only if contact with animals can be controlled (e.g. over a barrier).
- Do not use animal areas for public (non-animal) activities.
- Prohibit consumption of unpasteurized products (e.g. milk products and juices).
- Provide simple instructions in multiple formats that are age- and language-appropriate.
- Warn visitors about the risks for disease and injury.
- Advise visitors to closely supervise children and to be aware that objects such as clothing, shoes, and stroller wheels can become soiled and serve as a source of germs after leaving an animal area.
- Make visitors aware that young children, older adults, pregnant women, persons who are mentally impaired or immunocompromised are at increased risk for illness.

Liability: Liability for a petting zoo event is covered by the Iowa Code, Chapter 673 for domesticated animals listed in this section of the Code. Dogs, cats and some other pets are not provided liability coverage by Chapter 673. If your event includes domesticated animals listed in Chapter 673 (such as a bovine, swine, sheep, goat, domesticated deer, llama, poultry, mule, jenny, donkey, or hinny) it is **very important to post these signs near your event as specified in the Iowa Code:**

The location of the sign may be near or on a stable, corral, or arena owned or controlled by the domesticated animal professional. The sign must be clearly visible to a participant. This section does not require a sign to be posted on a domesticated animal or a vehicle powered by a domesticated animal. The notice shall appear in black letters a minimum of one inch high and in the following form:

WARNING UNDER IOWA LAW, A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL PROFESSIONAL IS NOT LIABLE FOR DAMAGES SUFFERED BY, AN INJURY TO, OR THE DEATH OF A PARTICIPANT RESULTING FROM THE INHERENT RISKS OF DOMESTICATED ANIMAL ACTIVITIES, PURSUANT TO IOWA CODE CHAPTER 673. YOU ARE ASSUMING INHERENT RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS DOMESTICATED ANIMAL ACTIVITY.

Hand Washing: Hand-washing is the single most important prevention step for reducing disease transmission. Hand-washing facilities should be provided at the exit of animal facilities. The use of running water and soap is the best prevention measure; however **alcohol-based** hand-sanitizers may be used if soap and water cannot be made available. Hand sanitizers are less effective if hands are visibly soiled, and may not be effective against some disease agents. A means of washing hands must be established. Water sources must allow the user to wash hands freely without continuously depressing the spigot or tilting the container. A bucket to collect wastewater must be below the hand washing container. Hand soap and disposable paper towels, or **alcohol-based** hand-sanitizers must be on-site at all times during the event. Hands must be wiped dry with paper or disposable towels (no cloth towels are allowed). This applies to soap and water hand-wash stations and does not apply if alcohol-based hand sanitizer is used.

Petting zoo sponsors must:

- Design transition areas for entering and exiting animal areas with appropriate signs or other forms of notification regarding risks for and location of hand-washing facilities.
- Maintain hand-washing stations that are accessible to children and require hand washing upon exiting animal areas.
- Post signs encouraging patrons to wash their hands after contacting animals.
- Provide adequate hand washing facilities at the site.
- Notify visitors that eating and drinking or placing things in their mouths should not occur after leaving the animal area until after their hands are washed.
- Direct visitors to wash their hands and assist children with hand washing following contact with animals or visiting an animal area.

Signs directing patrons to hand-washing facilities are important with a reminder to wash your hands:

“If you pet it, don’t forget it, wash your hands”

Waiver and Release of Liability Forms:

Club members organizing and participating in the petting zoo event must complete an Assumption of Risk and Waiver and Release of liability form.

In addition, there are often petting zoo participants who are donating the use of an animal at the petting zoo event. These individuals must complete a separate Assumption of Risk and Waiver and Release of Liability form. This form will explain that there are inherent risks associated with exposing an animal(s) to a petting zoo environment and to people who may be carrying organisms from other animals. Additionally, there is a significant risk of introducing infectious disease when bringing animals in from another location that may not all be of the same health status, especially if introduced without an appropriate isolation/quarantine time period.

Please contact Risk Management at (515) 294-7711 to prepare these documents.