

Petting Zoo Best Practices Checklist

The best practices described below are based on the [Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2013](#).

If you are a petting zoo operator, please use this checklist as a tool to design and operate your petting zoo according to the national standards. If you are hiring a petting zoo, please use this checklist to evaluate potential vendors.

Facility Design

- Handwashing stations
 - Running water
 - Accessible for children and persons with disabilities
 - Plan in place for restocking paper towels, soap, and water
- Hand sanitizer (should be used as a supplement to soap and water and does not replace soap and water for handwashing)
 - Plan in place for restocking hand sanitizer
- Petting of animals only allowed over/through barriers (fences); visitors not allowed in pens
- No physical contact by the public with chicks, ducklings, reptiles, calves, or dangerous and exotic animals (e.g., primates, wolf pups)
- No transport of manure/soiled bedding through public areas
- Transition area at entrance between non-animal and animal areas
 - Provide stroller and bag storage to keep items out of animal areas
- Transition area at exit as people leave animal space to non-animal space
 - Place handwashing stations position near exit so visitors can't miss them

Visitor Education

- Educational messages in multiple formats (e.g., signs, videos, recorded messages, stickers, bracelets, interaction of staff and visitors, etc.)
- Signage in transition area at entrance
 - Animals can carry germs that can make people sick
 - No food or drink in animal areas
 - No hand-to-mouth activities in the animal area (i.e., drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
 - Children under five years old, senior citizens, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions or a weakened immune system should be extra careful around animals
- Signage in transition area at exit
 - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after visiting the animals
- Staff members present to encourage safe animal contact
 - Remind visitors that animals can carry germs that make people sick
 - Remind visitors to refrain from risky activities in the animal area (i.e., drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
 - Remind visitors to wash their hands after visiting the animal area
 - Remind parents to supervise children with the animals

Animal Care and Management

- Sick or injured animal(s) immediately removed, especially if they have diarrhea/scours
- Manure/soiled bedding removed promptly
 - Limit visitor contact with manure/soiled bedding by restricting access (e.g., use of double barriers, sweeping up walkways, use of solid bottom fencing, etc.)
- Surfaces, especially pen railings, cleaned daily using soap and water
- Animals housed in a way that minimizes stress and overcrowding (this will decrease the amount of pathogen shedding in their feces)
- Feed provided in containers that won't be confused as human food (e.g., do not use ice cream cones)
- Vaccinate animals against rabies
 - Those with approved vaccine (e.g., dogs, cats, cattle, horses, sheep, etc.) should be vaccinated for rabies by your veterinarian. Animals without an approved vaccine (e.g., goats, llamas, camels, etc.) may be vaccinated off-label, by your veterinarian.

Staff Education

- Review best practices and recommendations from the Compendium on an annual basis
 - Educate staff about the risk for disease and injury associated with animals
 - Educate staff on how diseases are transmitted from animals to people
 - Educate staff on prevention messages that should be shared with visitors
- Ensure staff feel comfortable explaining these concepts to visitors
- Explain staff members' role(s) in the petting zoo
 - Teach people about animals
 - Teach people how to enjoy animals safely by following these best practices

Minnesota Department of Health
Zoonotic Diseases Unit
PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5414

To obtain this information
in a different format, call:
651-201-5414