

# Farm Animals & Visitors

## • Public Health & Safety Tips for Animal/People Interaction •

**H**aving the chance to interact with animals can be a wonderful learning experience, both for children and adults. However, healthy animals carry bacteria that can sometimes make people sick. Most people don't get sick from touching animals, but some people — the very young, the very old, pregnant women and people of any age with compromised immune systems — are at some risk of getting sick from bacteria from animals.

If you will be hosting visitors who will have contact with your animals, there are a few simple precautions you can take to prevent illness.

### **Educate your visitors:**

- Healthy animals carry bacteria that can sometimes make people sick.
- Young children, elderly people, pregnant women and people of any age with compromised immune systems are more likely to get sick from these bacteria.
- Washing hands well with soap and running water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after petting or touching animals can prevent illness.

### **Promote hand washing:**

- Provide hand washing facilities and/or hand sanitizers for visitors.  
(Young children will need supervision.)
- Remind visitors, both verbally and with signs, to wash hands well after interacting with animals.

Handwashing posters are available from the Vermont Department of Health - call 802-863-7240 or toll-free 800-640-4374 (in VT).

### **Promote food safety:**

- Provide an area for eating and drinking that is well apart from where people and animals interact. Do not allow animals into the eating/drinking area.
- If visitors will be feeding animals, allow only animal food to be used.  
Do not allow visitors to feed animals "people food".

# Public Health & Safety Tips for Animal/People Interaction

## Promote food safety (cont'd.):

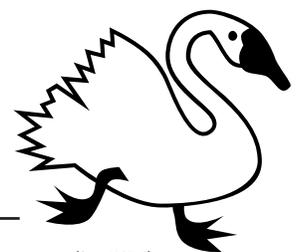
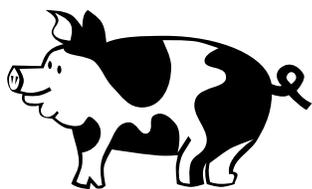
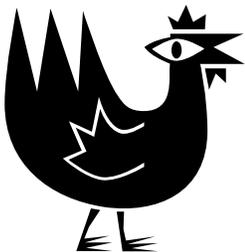
- Do not serve raw (unpasteurized) dairy products to your visitors.
- Label water sources and hoses used for watering and cleaning animal areas with a DO NOT DRINK WATER sign.

## Keep public areas clean:

- Remove manure from public areas.
- If animal births occur, make sure visitors not have contact with birthing tissues or fluids. Clean the area after each birth.
- If animal areas are converted to public use areas (such as for a public event), remove animal bedding, manure, feed, etc., and disinfect the area.

## Choose animals with public health and safety in mind:

- Monitor animal health carefully. Do not let people come into contact with sick animals.
- Keep animals under the care of a veterinarian. Keep animal vaccinations up to date.
- Avoid overcrowding of animals. Stressed animals are more likely to spread disease to humans.
- House animals to prevent their exposure to wild animals.
- Animals that are likely to cause injury to people (such as wolves, wolf-hybrids, bears, venomous reptiles) are not a good choice for interaction with people.
- Animals that often carry rabies (such as bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and coyotes) are not a good choice for interaction with people.
- Calves and other young ruminants, young poultry, reptiles and amphibians are not a good choice for interaction with people at higher risk of illness (the very young, the very old, pregnant women, and people with compromised immune systems).



---

**Questions?** Call the Vermont Department of Health: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374 (in VT)