

## Petting Zoo Best Practices Checklist

These best practices are based on the [Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2013](#), which can be found at: [nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalContactCompendium2013](http://nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalContactCompendium2013). If you are a livestock or poultry exhibit manager, please use this checklist as a tool to help design and operate your facility in a manner that is safe for both the animals and visitors

### **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 (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 sanitizer
- Petting of animals only allowed over/through barriers (fences); visitors not allowed into 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
  - Stroller and bag storage
- Transition area at exit as people leave animal space to non-animal space
  - Hand washing stations positioned near exit

### **Visitor Education**

- Educational messages in multiple formats (e.g., signs, videos, recorded messages, stickers, bracelets, interaction of staff and visitors)
- Signage at entrances and exits
  - No food or drink allowed in animal areas
  - No hand-to-mouth activities in the animal area (drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
  - Children under 5-years old, senior citizens, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions or a weakened immune system should be extra careful around animals



- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after visiting the animals
- Staff members present to encourage safe animal contact
  - Remind visitors to refrain from risky activities in the animal area (drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
  - Remind visitors to wash their hands after visiting the animal area
  - Remind parents to supervise children with the animals

### **Staff Education**

- Review best practices and recommendations from the Compendium (mentioned in the directions) 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

### **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)
- 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)

For further questions, please contact:

Shelley Mehlenbacher, DVM  
Assistant State Veterinarian  
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets  
Phone: 802-828-2421  
E-mail: [shelley.mehlenbacher@state.vt.us](mailto:shelley.mehlenbacher@state.vt.us)  
Website: [www.agriculture.vermont.gov](http://www.agriculture.vermont.gov)