



July 11, 2019

## Public Health Reminder for Animal Exhibitors

Dear Owners and Operators of Animal Venues and Exhibits,

As the fair season is taking off, we would like to send a reminder emphasizing the importance of your role in maintaining the health of animals and protecting the health of visitors.

Over the past few weeks, several children have been infected with Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) that may be associated with exposure to farm animal exhibits at the San Diego County Fair. Investigation of the cases, including the death of a young boy due to complications of the disease, is ongoing.

It is important to remember that even animals that appear healthy can harbor and shed organisms harmful to people, and there is risk of transmission in settings where there is contact with infected animals or their potentially contaminated environments, such as at county fairs, petting zoos, educational farms, and similar venues.

We recognize and support the many positive benefits of contact with animals, and that safety and health is an integral part of positive experiences at these exhibits. To help ensure that everyone can enjoy these events and stay healthy, please remember that practicing proper hygiene, such as hand washing, is one of the easiest and most effective ways to prevent transmission of pathogens. Recommendations for reducing risks associated with animal contact include:

- Providing stations for handwashing at animal exhibit exits (including lower stations that children can reach); ensure proper function and keep the stations well stocked, cleaned and sanitized regularly.
- Providing highly visible signs for how and when guests should wash their hands. Signage and rules should include requiring close supervision of young children in animal areas and preventing them from putting thumbs, fingers, or other objects (grass, animal feed, pacifiers) in their mouths.
- Keeping eating areas separate, and provide signs prohibiting eating, drinking, or smoking in animal areas.
- Having clearly marked designated areas for visitors to leave strollers and related items (e.g. toys, baby bottles, pacifiers) outside of animal areas.
- Sanitizing barns, livestock areas, petting zoo locations, and equipment used for feeding, cleaning, and handling; monitoring animals regularly for signs of illness.
- Educating staff and visitors on disease risks and ways to mitigate those risks. Some individuals considered to be at high risk for serious illness (children less than 5 years old, pregnant women, or people with weakened immune system) should

take heightened precautions or avoid animal contact. We are attaching a poster conveying helpful prevention messages in English and Spanish for you to print and use in designated areas as appropriate.

For additional information and resources, including posters and signage:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/stay-healthy-animal-exhibits.html>  
Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings:

<http://www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendiumAnimals.html>

CDFA Fairs & Expositions:

[https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Fairs\\_&\\_Expositions/Information/Animal\\_Exhibit\\_Signage.asp](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Fairs_&_Expositions/Information/Animal_Exhibit_Signage.asp)

Thank you for your attention and continued dedication.

Respectfully,



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Charity Dean, MD, MPH  
State Public Health Officer &  
Assistant Director



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Annette Jones, DVM  
State Veterinarian & Director

Attachment