



News Release

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Fair season is here: win the blue ribbon for health and safety

Keep the visit fun and avoid illnesses spread by animals

OLYMPIA — Hanging out with the goats, poultry, and cows can be the highlight of any trip to the local fair. Yet fair animals can also spread certain diseases.

“Going to see the animals at the fair is a treasured tradition for many families,” said Ron Wohrle, public health veterinarian for the Department of Health. “But even healthy animals can spread *E. coli* and *Salmonella* bacteria to people, which can make them sick. By following some basic safety tips you can enjoy the animals at the fair and stay healthy.”

Many kinds of animals can carry dangerous bacteria and viruses. The germs can be in their saliva, on their coats, and on surfaces contaminated by their waste. People can pick up those germs when they touch the animals or their surroundings. Most get sick by putting their hands or a contaminated object in their mouth or nose.

An estimated half-million people in the U.S. get sick every year because of a visit to animals at a fair, petting zoo, or other exhibit. Washington rules require [signs warning people of the health risks](#), along with hand washing or sanitization stations near animal exhibits. Pregnant women, older adults, kids under five, and anyone who has an underlying illness should be especially careful to follow posted precautions.

Washing hands with running water and soap is the best way to avoid getting sick. It’s especially important after touching animals or their surroundings and before eating or drinking. Children under five should be watched at all times while they visit animals to make sure they don’t put their hands or objects, like a pacifier, in their mouth while interacting with animals. Stroller wheels can also pick up germs from animal areas and have been tied to illnesses in the past.

Avoiding animal-related illnesses at the fair

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Call your health care provider immediately if someone in your family becomes sick after coming in contact with animals.

The Department of Health investigates cases and outbreaks of animal-related illnesses and works to make sure that places where animals are displayed follow state regulations. Information on [staying healthy around animals](#) is available online.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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