



Animal Exhibit & Petting Zoo Best Practices Checklist



This checklist is for use as a tool to design and operate an animal exhibit/petting zoo or evaluate potential vendors. Please contact the County of San Diego One Health Epidemiology Program if you have questions: 619-692-8499, PHS.OHEP.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Facility Design

- ☐ Handwashing stations
 - ☐ Running water
 - ☐ Accessible for children and persons with disabilities
 - ☐ Plan in place for restocking paper towels, soap, and water
 - ☐ Trash receptacles located nearby handwashing station
- ☐ Hand sanitizer (used as a supplement to soap and water, not to replace soap and water for handwashing)
 - ☐ Plan in place for restocking hand sanitizer
- ☐ Petting of animals limited to over/through double barriers (fences)
- ☐ No physical contact by the public with juvenile animals including chicks, ducklings, reptiles, calves, or dangerous and exotic animals (i.e., primates, wolf pups)
- ☐ No transport of manure/soiled bedding through public areas
- ☐ One-way entrance and exit into animal enclosures
- ☐ Transition area at entrance between non-animal and animal areas
 - ☐ Provide stroller and bag storage to keep items out of the animal area
- ☐ Transition area at exit as people leave animal space to non-animal space
 - ☐ Place handwashing stations near exit so visitors can't miss them

Visitor Education

- ☐ Educational messages in multiple formats and languages (i.e., signs, videos, stickers, interaction of staff and visitors)
- ☐ Signage in transition area at entrance
 - ☐ Animals can carry germs that make people sick
 - ☐ Do not touch eyes, nose, or mouth while in the animal area
 - ☐ No food or drink in animal areas
 - ☐ No hand-to-mouth activities in the animal area (i.e., drinking, eating, bottles, pacifiers)
 - ☐ Children under 5 years old, senior citizens, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions or a weakened immune system are more likely to get sick from animal germs
- ☐ Signage in transition area at exit
 - ☐ Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after visiting the animals



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- ☐ Staff members present to encourage safe animal contact
 - ☐ Remind visitors that animals can carry germs that make people sick
 - ☐ Remind visitors to not eat, drink, or use bottles/pacifiers while in the animal area
 - ☐ Remind visitors to not touch their nose, eyes, or mouth while in the animal area
 - ☐ Remind visitors to wash their hands after visiting the animal area
 - ☐ Remind parents to supervise children with the animals

Animal Care and Management

- ☐ Ensure sturdy and secure barriers (i.e., fences and cages) around animal exhibits
- ☐ Label hoses or other water dispensers in public places “Not for human consumption”
- ☐ Make sure floor drains are clear of debris or standing water
- ☐ Remove sick or injured animal(s) from exhibit immediately, especially if they have diarrhea/scours
- ☐ Remove manure/soiled bedding promptly
 - ☐ Limit visitor contact with manure/soiled bedding by restricting access (i.e., use of double barriers, sweeping up walkways, use of solid bottom fencing)
- ☐ Clean surfaces, especially pen railings using soap and water
- ☐ Provide animal feeding containers that won’t be confused as human food (e.g., do not use ice cream cones)
- ☐ Protect feed and water from contamination
 - ☐ Sealed storage for feed
 - ☐ Deter flies, and wildlife by sealing food, remove manure and standing water
- ☐ Observe the animals daily to ensure they are in good health
 - ☐ Isolate any animals that appear ill and contact your veterinarian
- ☐ Establish a relationship with a veterinarian to:
 - ☐ Perform health exams and treat ill animals
 - ☐ Develop a biosecurity plan for new and returning animals or animals that become sick
 - ☐ Provide rabies vaccinations for applicable mammals interacting with the public
 - ☐ Maintain rabies vaccine record on site at the fair/petting zoo
 - ☐ The California Department of Food and Agriculture regulates animal agriculture animal health and diseases. Work with your veterinarian to prevent and report any of these diseases
 - [CDFA List of Reportable Conditions for Animals and Animal Products](#)
- ☐ Any animal bites are reportable to local animal control, find your jurisdiction here: [Animal Control Agencies by Zip Code](#)



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Staff Education

- ☐ Encourage staff and visitors to wash their hands before and after interacting with animals or being in or near their enclosures or prior to working with other animals
- ☐ Review petting zoo best practices and recommendations with staff 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 and how to safely interact with them. Sometimes that means viewing the animal only.
- ☐ Educate staff on zoonotic diseases and the importance of biosecurity
- ☐ Contact the County of San Diego, Epidemiology Unit to discuss any concerns regarding suspected human illness related to animal exposure
 - ☐ To voluntarily report a single case or outbreak of disease, condition, or syndrome in animals, please fill out the following [form](#).
 - ☐ To report a potential outbreak of illness call the Epidemiology Unit directly (619) 692-8499

Resources

- [Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings](#)
- [Best Practices for Fair Management and Animal Exhibitors \(PDF\)](#)
- [Fact Sheet for Fair Staff \(PDF\)](#)
- [Zoonotic Disease Train-the-Trainer Course](#)
- [Biosecurity for Multi-Species Farms](#)
- Additional information about common zoonotic diseases in California:
 - [CDPH Zoonotic Diseases webpage](#)
 - [CDPH Salmonellosis webpage](#)
 - [CDPH Shiga Toxin-producing *E. coli* \(STEC\) Infection webpage](#)
- 4-H Clover Safe Notes
 - #16 [Safe Animal Contact at Petting Zoos and Fairs \(PDF\)](#)
 - #17 [Organizing and Operating a Safe Petting Zoo Event \(PDF\)](#)