

## **Appendix B: Animals in Public Settings--Information for Visitors**

Interacting with animals can be a wonderful experience, both for children and adults. However, healthy animals carry bacteria and other organisms that can sometimes make people sick. People can catch these organisms where animals are present, especially when contact with the animals is encouraged. It is therefore important that all visitors take precautions to avoid illness. This handout summarizes precautions that need to be taken.

### Behaviors to Avoid

If a person contacts an animal, the person's hands become dirty and can pick up bacteria or other organisms. If these dirty hands come in contact with the mouth, the person might ingest the organisms and become sick.

In animal areas take the following precautions:

- Don't eat or drink; eating and drinking should occur in designated non-animal areas. Smoking should not occur in animal areas.
- If possible, avoid feeding animals. If feeding animals, use only animal foods.
- Supervise young children closely to avoid hand to mouth behaviors (such as thumb sucking). Toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups, and baby bottles should not be used.

### Hand-washing

Hand-washing with soap and water will clean the hands and prevent illness. It is the MOST important thing that can be done to prevent illness! Hands should be washed after leaving animal areas (regardless if animal contact occurred) and before eating in the non-animal areas. Supervise and assist children with hand-washing.

### Populations at High Risk

Some people are at a higher risk of getting sick from bacteria carried by animals in these settings. These people include:

- Young children (especially less than five years old)
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- Persons who are mentally impaired
- Persons with compromised immune systems

Persons at a higher risk of getting sick should take heightened precautions that include:

- Thorough and frequent hand-washing.
- Consider avoiding contact with animals and their environment (pens, bedding, manure).
- Avoid animals that are at increased risk of spreading disease, such as young ruminants, young poultry, reptiles, amphibians, and ill animals.