



Petting Farm Workshop

March 27, 2013



Fulfilling A Need



As Agritourism continues to grow and change, we saw the need for a checklist of best practices for Petting Farms, not only for your safety but also for the safety of the public.

Thanks to Dr. Kristy Bradley, State Epidemiologist with the Oklahoma State Department of Health, who has helped us put together these public health points for petting farms.

Dr. Bradley has been a friend and partner to the Department of Agriculture and the Agritourism Program for many years. She cares about small businesses and Agritourism business and the challenges they face.

What We Want to Avoid

- Injuries or animal bites to guests that could have been prevented
- Infectious disease transmission from petting farm animals, Agritourism environment, or purchased food or produce to guests

Outbreaks or Incidents in Oklahoma Associated with Farm Visits

- Oct, 1999 – outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 associated with drinking unpasteurized apple cider purchased at farm stands and pumpkin patch (16 ill, 6 hospitalized)
- May, 2003 – 8 of 22 children ill with Campylobacteriosis following a school field trip to a farm
 - Contact with multiple animals, no hand-washing facilities, offered homemade ice cream made with raw eggs
- April, 2005 – 11 Scouts ill, 3 hospitalized with Campylobacteriosis after a field trip to a dairy farm
 - Animal contact, no hand-washing facilities, offered raw milk
- Oct-Nov, 2010 – 3 children ill, 2 hospitalized with acute kidney failure due to infection with E. coli O157:H7 after visiting a pumpkin patch and petting farm
 - Fecal cultures from some sheep & goats revealed same organism

Are there lurking dangers amongst this fun?



Infectious Organisms of Highest Concern

- Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (*E. coli* O157, O111, O26, others)
- *Salmonella*
- *Cryptosporidium*
- *Campylobacter*
- Rabies virus
- *Coxiella burnetii* (Q-fever)

Enteric Diseases

- Highest risk from petting farms
- Animals can harbor toxin-producing *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Campylobacter* and be healthy.
- These bacteria can survive for weeks to months in animal bedding, soil, water, manure piles, and on gates and fences.
- Shedding is more common in young or stressed animals.

Steps to Minimize Risks

1. Inform yourself – evaluate your venue for high risk points of contact
2. Maintain proper care and management of animals
3. Ensure access to proper hand-washing stations
4. Design transition areas between animal and non-animal areas
5. Prohibit food, drinks, and tobacco use in animal areas
6. Do not offer or sell unpasteurized food items
7. Provide signage and education to public about disease prevention procedures

Animal Management & Care

- Establish isolation of newly introduced animals for at least 30 days before commingling with other animals
- Do have periodic fecal checks of petting farm animals for parasites and protozoa (Cryptosporidium)
- Follow veterinarian's advise for preventive medicine
- Not considered beneficial to screen routinely for Salmonella or STEC
- Monitor for signs of illness daily; remove from public contact if ill
- Minimize stress and overcrowding
- Animals in petting farms should only have access to potable water, not drinking pond water

Feeding Petting Farm Animals



Agritourism petting farms are wonderful attractions that are fun and educational. They provide a way for an Agritourism business owner to increase their revenue through feed sales and they provide children the opportunity to learn about farm animals and the animals' environments. The idea is not to eliminate feeding interaction but rather to make it as safe as possible.

Things to consider about feeding:

- Feed must be kept in containers with lids to avoid contact with rodents or varmints. This will help to keep the food from becoming contaminated.
- Try considering offering observation opportunities rather than feeding interaction with certain animals.
- While petting or feeding animals, discourage children from touching their faces or putting their fingers in their mouths.
- After customers feed animals, it is important to wash their hands immediately.
- Small children should be accompanied by an adult through the petting farm.
- Demonstrate proper feeding techniques to avoid bites. i.e., holding hands flat.

Have Fun!

Add humor to remind
people, gently, about
proper petting farm
protocol!



For your safety:

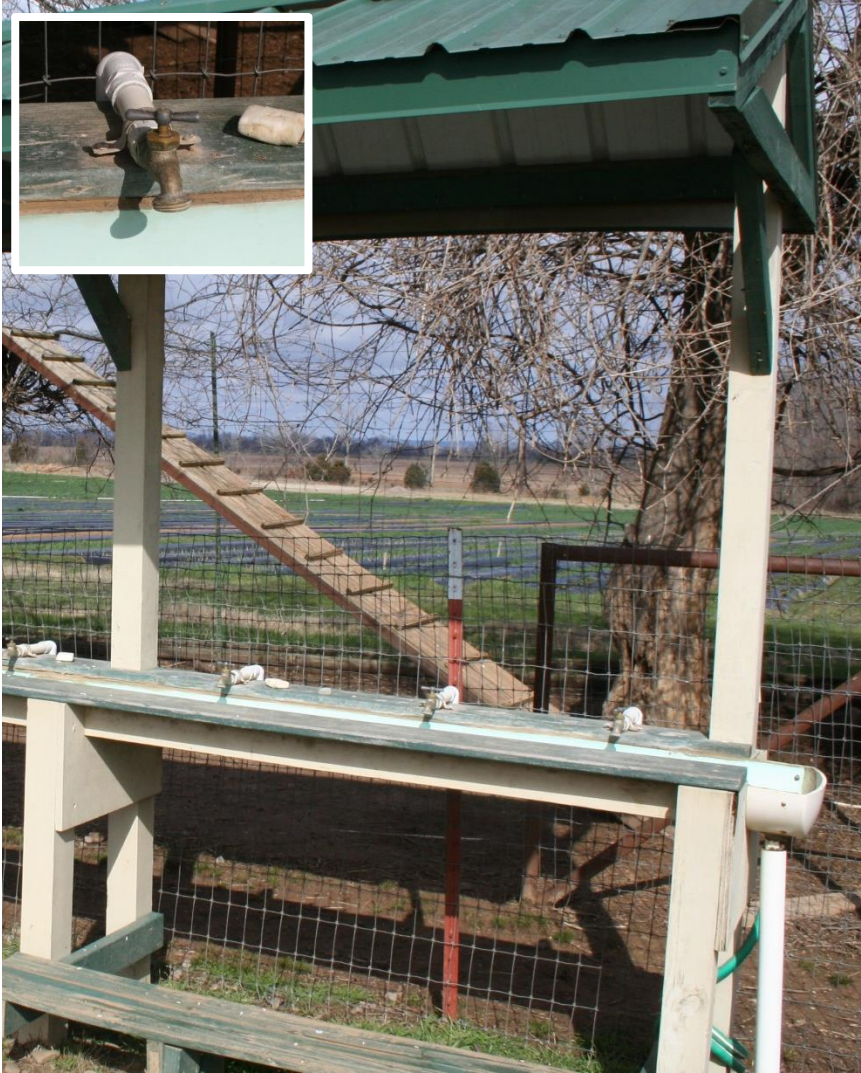
- Always **wash hands** after contact with animals.
- **No food or drink** allowed in animal contact areas.
- **Refrain from using pacifiers** or allowing children to put fingers in their mouths.
- **Do not chase** or pick up the animals.
- **No strollers** in animal contact areas.
- Small children should always be **accompanied by an adult.**



Access to Hand-Washing Stations

- Handwashing important after:
 - exiting animal areas
 - after removing soiled clothing or shoes
 - completing a hands-on project with animals, animal products or items that may have been cross-contaminated with animal feces (eggs, pumpkins, hay bales)
 - before eating or drinking
- Ensure accessible to small children
- Need number sufficient for maximum anticipated attendance
- Must only be hooked up to potable water

Examples of Hand Washing Stations



Hand Washing Stations



You've been hearing it since you were 2 years old, the importance of hand washing.

The Basics:

- Running water, hot whenever possible.
- Soap in dispensers (germs can congregate on bar soap).
- Provide paper towels for drying with trash receptacle.

Location:

- Need to be conveniently located near the petting farm area and, when possible, provide separate washing stations near food consumption areas. This can include your on-farm restroom facilities.

Alcohol-based Sanitizer:

- Effective in reducing the number of germs on your hands but it cannot remove dirt.
- Fast-acting
- Must be used in recommended amounts.
- Somewhat effective when hand washing is not available.
- An additional precaution after thorough hand washing.
- Good idea for teachers/chaperones to hand out hand wipes or hand gel to kids as they get back on the bus or in the van.

Establish Flow of People



ENTER
ONLY

ENTRANCE
→

EXIT

ENTER
→

EXIT
ONLY

Public Flow and Transition Between Animal and Non-Animal Areas

- Very important.
- One-way traffic flow where animal contact is encouraged is best with separate entrance & exit points.
- Frequently remove manure and soiled bedding from animal areas.
- Avoid transporting manure and soiled bedding through non-animal areas, parking areas, or transition areas.
- Minimize use of animal areas for public events, e.g., animal barns for receptions, recently used pastures for maze or pumpkin patch.
- Use solid barriers about 10-12" high at bottom of chain link fences to decrease spillage of manure, bedding or soiled feed into public walkways.
- Look at drainage patterns and take steps to prevent water draining from animal pens into public areas following a rain or hosing down of area.

Barriers to Trap Litter



Reduces litter on the sides of pens where visitors will be gathering.



Food and Drink

- Have a designated area for food and drinks away from animal pens.
- Post signage discouraging food and drinks near animal pens.
- Always have customers wash their hands between petting or feeding and eating.
- If you provide tables for food and drink area, clean tables periodically throughout the day (preferably after each group leaves a table).
- Consider using non-porous surfaces for tables and chairs because wooden tables and benches are difficult to disinfect.
- Have adequate trash cans to avoid waste around your farm.



Designated Area for Food and Drink



Strollers, Wagons and Wheelchairs, oh my!

- Part of the appeal of petting farms is providing an opportunity for families to encourage their children to interact with animals that they may not otherwise have a chance to see. This is also true for the disabled.
- Because many of the children are small, parents often use strollers and wagons to make this experience easier. The idea here is not to discourage families to use them; but limit the areas they can be used for safety reasons.
- Strollers, wagons and wheelchairs have wheels that potentially can roll through feces and litter, which is then taking home with the customer.
- Provide a designated area for “parking” these items while customers go through the petting farm area. An alternative, is to have a pathway (cement or gravel) that would make it easier for customers to see where it is acceptable to use devices with wheels.



LEAVE THE FARM AT THE FARM.

Porous vs. Non-Porous Surfaces

Porous:

- Retains germs and bacteria that can cause infectious diseases.
- Difficult to clean.

Regardless of your current set-up, you should establish regular and consistent cleaning schedules for tables and chairs, fences where little hands touch, rails, posts, walls, doors, playground equipment and certainly restrooms.

You can eliminate a lot of your problems by being diligent and properly cleaning surfaces daily.

Non-Porous:

- Provides surfaces where germs and bacteria cannot survive as easily.
- Is easier to clean with standard disinfectants (Roccal®, Zephiran®, 1:32 dilution of bleach).



Foot Baths

- Some organisms can live for days or weeks on dust and dirt, both of which stay on footwear.
- Protect animals from things that could be introduced to the barnyard.
- Protect visitors from taking any unwanted organisms home.

Equipment

- A tray with short sides
- Long-handled utility brush
- Hose or spigot close by
- Small synthetic bristle or “fake grass” doormat
- A lid for the tray (depending on the location and type of disinfectant)

Disinfectants

- Always mix according to the label
- Educate staff about mixing disinfectant
- Recommended disinfectants:
 - Tek-Trol, made by AgriLabs
 - 1-Stroke Environ, made by Steris



The Agritourism Dog



A dog being a dog:

- Greets customers at their car with a smile, wagging tail and muddy paws.
- Sometimes, chases the car(s).
- Sometimes brings a friend or two or three ...
- Eats like family.
- May not treat everyone like family.

Think like the customer:

- Upon arrival, do you feel safe to get out of your car?
- Does this dog respect your space?
- Your clothes don't need to be soiled by dogs who jump on you.
- What if I'm traveling with my own pet, how will the Agritourism dog react?
- Do you feel at ease to experience the location?

Dogs and other animals can act differently in certain circumstances and around new people. Beware that if they become scared or startled, their reaction may even surprise you.

Insurance Concerns Regarding Dogs



Breeds

- Certain breeds can actually increase your insurance premium because of behavior patterns such as biting and aggression.
- Understand the public perception of dog(s).

A Pack

- Five or more dogs together in one place constitute a pack according to most insurance companies. Even if they don't belong to you. This could lead to higher insurance premiums or denial for insurance.
- This is not breed specific. Any five or more dogs are considered a pack.

Pet Policy

- Do you allow guests to bring pets onto your farm?
- Does this bring you to five or more dogs in one place? (A pack)

Agritourism venues often have family pets who interact with the public because many times, the family lives at the business location. Even though you love your dog and feel they are completely safe, remember that you are operating a business. Most customers are not comfortable being greeted by a dog or having a dog hang around them the entire visit.

Vaccines for Dogs, Cats and Ferrets

- Oklahoma law states that ALL dogs, cats and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian by 4 months of age.
- Regardless if you are vaccinating all your other animals, these three species must have veterinary records for the rabies vaccine.



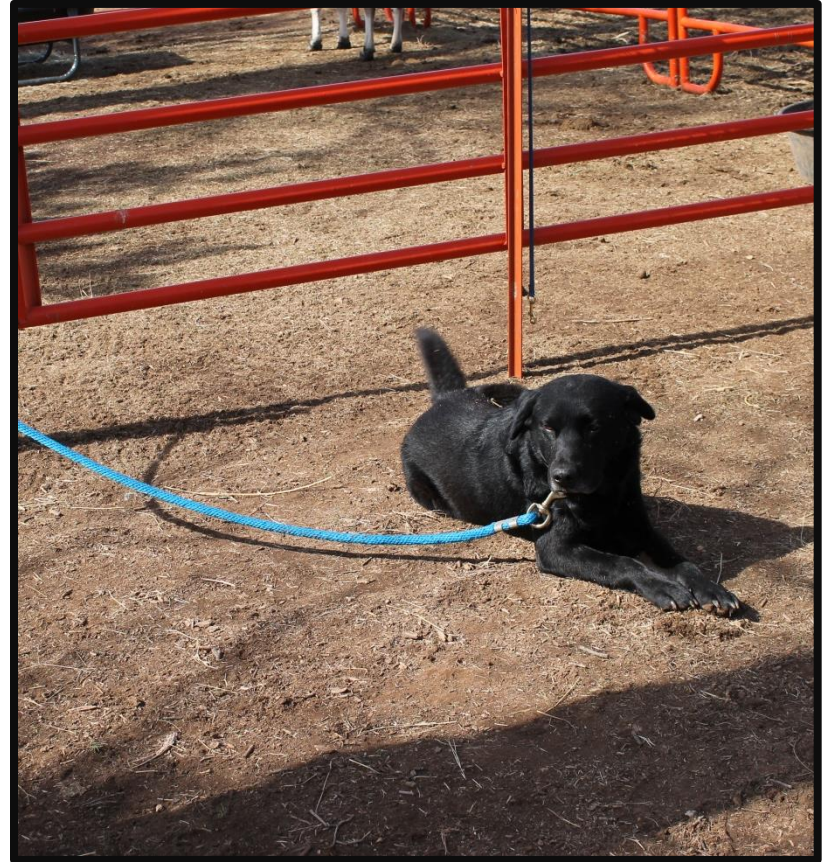
Public Health Management of Animal Bites Occurring to Visitors

- Dogs & Cats with current veterinary record of rabies vaccination
 - Home observation for 10 days
- Dogs & Cats *without* current veterinary record of vaccination
 - Mandatory 10 day quarantine at veterinary hospital; rabies vaccination before release to owner
- Horses, llamas, other livestock-type animals
 - 30 day quarantine on farm; veterinary examination at beginning and end of quarantine
- Rabbits, chinchillas, guinea pigs, other rodent pets
 - Very low risk animal for rabies transmission; no action unless animal is ill or unusual circumstances surrounding bite

Our Suggestions

Contain your dogs

- As much as you love your dog and love your home with your dog running free, remember this is a business.
- This can be a difficult topic but if you have a dog that is not contained, you need to implement a new plan.
- Ultimately, reduce your risk by keeping dogs and the public separate.
- We receive feedback from customers who are unwilling to return to businesses simply because of dogs.



Fresh Produce Safety



- Harmful bacteria and parasites from animal's intestinal tracts can also make their way to the berry or pumpkin patches.
- Use fences and nets to keep deer, birds, and other wildlife from eating and contaminating the produce.
- Use potable water for irrigation.
- Ensure that manure-containing water is not draining from animal areas.
- Instruct guests to wash the picked fruit and produce before enjoying!

Berry Washing



- Evidence suggests human pathogens proliferate more readily in injured and decayed produce so cull fruits with these symptoms.
- All produce should be thoroughly washed before eating. Wash under running water prior to eating, cutting, or cooking. Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first.
- Washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes **is not recommended**.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- Drying produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel may further reduce bacteria that may be present.
- If an item is pre-washed, it will be stated on the package and can be used without further washing. However, pre-cut or pre-washed produce stored in open bags should be washed before using.

Sources



Mahovic, Michael. *Good Agricultural Practices for Production and Handling of Strawberry, Blackberry and Blueberry*. University of Florida Food Quality and Safety Design Team, 2002.

McCrea, Brigid A. and Bradley, Francine A. *Footbaths for Animal Facilities: Easier Than You Think!* University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2008.

State of Oklahoma. *Safe Handling of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Public Health Fact Sheet*. Oklahoma State Department of Health Acute Disease Services, 2008.

National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. *Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings*, 2011. MMWR 2011;Vol. 60/No. 4.

It's Fun on the Farm!

