

Enjoy the Fair

But Don't Forget to Wash Your Hands Before You Eat!

Sometimes people get sick after they have been at the fair. Was it the food? What about the water? Surprising to many people is to realize that their illness may have come from petting the animals at the fair.

How do people get infected from animals?

Sometimes animals shed pathogens (germs that can make you sick) in their droppings. The animal's hair, mouthy, manure, drinking water, bedding and the pen can be contaminated. A person can get sick if they get the germs on their hands and then eat something with the dirty hands. Children who are in barns may get sick if they put their dirty fingers in their mouth.

What infections can farm animals give to people?

Farm animals can carry many different types of pathogens, including *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Giardia*.

What types of farm animals carry these pathogens?

Cattle, calves, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, dogs and cats may be the source of one of the pathogens listed above. The animals may not appear ill. Young farm animals are more likely to be infected than adult animals.

What are the symptoms if I get infected with one of these pathogens?

Some infections cause mild stomach cramps and diarrhea. Occasionally, there is severe illness with vomiting, diarrhea (maybe with blood), and other symptoms. *E. coli* O157:H7 infection in children can damage the intestine and kidneys. Children, elderly and persons with altered immune systems are more likely to have serious complications.

Has human illness been linked to contact with farm animals in Washington State?

In May 2000, five children were ill with *E. coli* O157:H7 after visiting a petting zoo. There were cases of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections associated with the Puyallup Fair that may have been from touching the animals and then eating without washing hands.

What can I do to reduce the risk of illness after touching a farm animal?

Always wash hands after touching farm animals. Do not eat or drink in the area where animals are located. After visiting barns, wash hands thoroughly (at least 20 seconds of scrubbing with soap) before eating or putting anything into the mouth. Adults should closely supervise hand washing by children.

--Val Hillers, Ph.D., R.D.
Extension Food Specialist
Washington State University
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