



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Governmental Communications

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Have Fun and Stay Healthy at Animal Exhibits *Reduce the risk of exposure to harmful germs and bacteria*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Charles County – Contact with animals in public settings, such as petting zoos, fairs, and other animal exhibits, provides opportunities for entertainment and education about animals. It is important to be safe and guard against potentially serious and sometimes fatal diseases that can be acquired in these settings. Animals sometimes carry germs and bacteria that are harmful to humans, especially children and those with weakened immune systems.

All animals naturally carry a range of microorganisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans and cause illness, human injury, and allergic reactions. Many diseases in the past decade have been linked with animal contact at petting zoos, zoos, circuses, farm tours, livestock birthing exhibits, county or state fairs, and schools. Organisms linked to human disease have included E. Coli 0157, Campylobacter, Salmonella, Giardia, Rabies, and Cryptosporidium.

You and your family can enjoy animal exhibits and stay healthy by following these simple rules:

- Always wash your hands immediately after petting, handling or feeding animals or touching the animals' living quarters, especially before eating and drinking. Hand washing with water and soap is best. Carry antibacterial wipes or instant hand sanitizer if hand washing facilities are not available.
- Keep food and drinks out of animal areas. Do not share your food with animals. Only feed animals with food supplied by the facility and follow staff instructions.
- Supervise children closely. Children under the age of five are more susceptible to the bacteria. Never allow children to put their hands or objects, such as pacifiers or bottles, in their mouths while interacting with animals.

For additional information on animal exhibit safety, visit www.scchealth.org and click on the current "Timely Topic" or contact the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment at 636-949-7400.