

Farm Visitor Biosafety

Keeping Animals and Visitors Healthy

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Farm visits are an exciting way to demonstrate the care that goes into raising healthy animals. Allowing visitors access to animals is often the most popular part of farm visits but does pose some risks to both the visitors and the farm animals. Some simple precautions taken before and during the farm visit can help to ensure that the visit is safe for both the visitors and the animals.

- **Potential Risks to Farm Visitors.**

Contact with farm animals has been demonstrated to be risk factor for the transmission of several organisms that can cause disease in humans. Human pathogens such as *E. coli* O157:H7, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, *cryptosporidia* and *Campylobacter* can be shed in manure or raw milk (even in some healthy animals!) and can be transmitted to humans.

- **Understanding Risks**

Certain farm animals have a greater risk for transmitting infections to humans as compared to others. In general, calves, recently fresh cows and sick animals are more likely to shed human pathogens as compared to other farm animals. They are also the most susceptible animals to acquire contagious animal diseases.

- **Keep Food and Animals Separate**

Don't mix food and animals – one of the greatest risks to visitors is contact with manure. Many calves shed *Campylobacter* (the #1 cause of diarrhea in humans), *cryptosporidia* and *Salmonella* in their manure. If children contact calves and then put their hands in their mouths or handle food - they are at risk. If you have treats for the kids or if they bring lunches - feed them well away from the animals and make sure that they clean their hands before eating. Better yet - feed them first before they contact animals (they should still wash their hands).

- **Consider the Age Group**

Little children probably can't keep their hands out of their mouths and probably shouldn't touch the calves. Big kids should have proper hygiene explained to them and if you let them feed or pet the calves, have them immediately clean and dry their hands with soap and running water. If running water is not available a waterless hand cleaner or antibacterial hand wipes can be substituted but the ability of these substances to successfully inactivate pathogens has not been documented under farm conditions.

- **Keep Visitors Away From Sick Animals**

Keep visitors out of fresh pens and sick cow areas. This commonsense precaution will also help keep visitors away from needles and syringes.

- **Serve ONLY dairy products made from pasteurized milk.**

Every year people get sick from the consumption of raw milk and raw milk products. Young children (<5 years of age), elderly, pregnant women and immunocompromised persons (those with HIV/AIDS or undergoing chemotherapy) are especially at risk from these products.

