

Petting Zoos: A Silent Epidemic?



Lifeforce/Peter Hamilton Copyright

Goat covered with feces jumping on kids at a Petting Zoo.



Lifeforce/Peter Hamilton Copyright

Newborn lamb with a broken leg who was chased by kids at a Petting Zoo

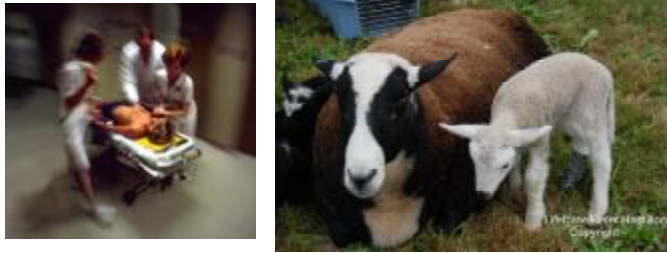
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1. Introduction of Lifeforce Petting Zoo Investigation

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Health Hazards and Harassment of Animals Common in Petting Zoos



Lifeforce is a Vancouver-based ecology organization that looks at the interrelationship of human, animal and environmental problems. As part of this work we have investigated and made recommendations to improve petting zoos in the 80s and 90s.

In 1988 one of the highest profile cases involved the Stanley Park Children's Zoo when Lifeforce discovered that when the babies grew up some operators send them to auction where they were mistreated. Most of the animals at auctions are sold for food slaughter. Evidence presented to the Vancouver Parks Board resulted in them stopping sending animals to auctions.

In 2007 Lifeforce decide to update our previous findings. We found that many operators try to downplay the threats to humans. The animals can harbour a variety of diseases. The pens were children play can be soaked with urine and remains of feces that are not picked up by broom/shovels. Petting zoos are hotbeds of serious pathogens, including E. coli and salmonella bacteria. Numerous children have been severely sickened as a result of visiting animal displays, and some have even died. Those who come in contact with E. coli can develop bloody diarrhea, anemia, chronic kidney failure, or neurological impairments such as seizures or strokes.

During Lifeforce's investigation we found that there are only guidelines not regulations. These guidelines are often not adhered to and there is a lack of enforcement.

There may well be an increase of activities that increase people's exposure to animals that they are not usually in contact with. It appears that some of this is associated to factory farm operations in an attempt to increase farmers' income. New tourist attractions and promotion of BC Agriculture is seen as the main goal of government agencies. Some Petting Zoo businesses are travelling rental operations.

The industrialized use of animals is a major cause of Global Warming. The conventional factory farming system produces gases and wastes that are major contributors to climate changes and health hazards. Any increase in the use of animals in the factory farming industry further contributes to Global Warming

We also looked at other operations that could expose people to health that do not commonly follow petting zoo guidelines. This included a zoo, an aquarium, an auction, children's rodeo and agricultural fairs. Other businesses of concern are animal swap meets, pet stores, circuses, carnivals, farm tours, livestock-birthing exhibits, educational exhibits at schools, and wildlife photo opportunities.

The growing Petting Zoo business may well be a growing silent epidemic. People are usually not properly informed about the health risks and preventative measures. Then the children's complaints of upset tummies, vomiting or diarrhea may not be reported. Lifeforce will be urging the government to ban Petting Zoos because health risks and animal welfare abuses cannot be prevented. If governments fail to ban Petting Zoos then all such activities must be regulated and enforced. This is the very least that must be done in order to try to reduce the health hazards and animal abuses.

2. Human Health Problems
a) Petting Zoo Related Health Hazards

2. Human Health Problems



a) Petting Related Health Hazards

Health officials have stated that Petting Zoos can be hotbeds of serious pathogens, including *E. coli*, and salmonella bacteria. Hundreds of people have been sickened and some have died. Also, people have had kidney failure dialysis and transfusions have been needed.

In London, ON, Sept – Oct 1999 – About 160 Sick People

Can J Infect Dis. 2002 May–Jun; 13(3): 175–181.

Outbreak of *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7 related to animal contact at a petting zoo

POPULATION:

People with laboratory evidence of *E coli* 0157:H7 (seven people) and others with diarrhea (155 people) who called the health unit following a media release were interviewed. Animals that were accessed most frequently by the public in the agriculture pavilion were tested for *E coli* 0157:H7. In the case control study, a case was defined as someone with laboratory confirmed *E coli* 0157:H7, or someone who developed severe or bloody diarrhea two to eight days after attending the agricultural pavilion at the fair (61 people). A convenience sample of people who attended the agricultural pavilion but did not develop diarrhea was selected as the control group (89 people).

CONCLUSIONS:

Results of this investigation suggest strongly that the goats and sheep from the petting zoo were the source of this outbreak of *E coli* 0157:H7.

In Vancouver, BC 2004 – About 72 Sick People

Public Health Agency of Canada

Volume 30-20, 15 October 2004

Petting zoo-associated *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 - Secondary transmission, asymptomatic infection, and prolonged shedding in the classroom

Introduction

On 10 November 2003, two public health units notified the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) of five laboratory-confirmed and two clinical cases of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 associated with school and daycare field trips to a local farm. The main attraction to the farm was its pumpkin patch. A petting zoo also operated on the premises.

Petting zoos have been associated with *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks⁽¹⁻³⁾. Given the epidemiologic link between all cases and the farm, the hypothesis under joint investigation by the BCCDC and local health units was that the infections resulted from contact with the petting zoo animals. The purposes of this investigation were to verify the cause of the outbreak, determine the outbreak's scope, and identify activities or behaviours that influenced the risk of infection.

Methods

Farm inspection: The farm was inspected on 10 November 2003. A fresh stool specimen from a goat and an older stool specimen of unidentified origin were collected from a pen that housed goats and sheep. Mud, pumpkin and water specimens were also collected.

Laboratory investigation: Human stool specimens were submitted to local laboratories. Subsequent isolations of *E. coli* O157:H7 were serotyped, tested for presence of, and production of, Verotoxin by Polymerase Chain Reaction and/or Verotoxin Assay, and subtyped by Pulsed Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE) by the Enterics Section of the BCCDC Laboratory Services. PFGE patterns indistinguishable from each other were considered to be from the same source.

The animal and environmental specimens were directly inoculated into a selective enrichment broth for *E. coli* O157:H7. The pumpkin was rinsed in 200 cc of enrichment broth in a large sterile stomacher bag to remove debris. After incubation, *E. coli* O157:H7 was purified from the broth using an immunomagnetic separation technique (Dynabeads anti-*E. coli* O157, Dynal ASA, Oslo, Norway) before plating onto sorbitol MacConkey agar. Suspect colonies were isolated, confirmed by traditional biochemical means, and subjected to PFGE analysis.

Case finding: The farm operator provided a list of the schools and daycares that had visited the farm. Letters were sent to the guardians of children in these facilities, asking them to contact the local public health authorities if their children had experienced diarrhea following the field trip and to contact their family physicians if they had any concerns. Public health inspectors used a case report

form to collect demographic, exposure and symptom information from all people reporting to public health authorities.

Epidemiologic investigation: Cases were categorized as either laboratory-confirmed or clinical, and either primary or secondary. Laboratory-confirmed cases were individuals who had epidemiologic links to the farm and *E. coli* O157:H7 isolated from their stool. Clinical cases were individuals with epidemiologic links to the farm who experienced diarrhea or bloody diarrhea after 1 October 2003. Due to the concurrent circulation of a virus causing a combination of respiratory and gastrointestinal symptoms in symptoms and no bloody diarrhea were excluded from the clinical case definition.

Primary cases were defined as laboratory-confirmed or clinical cases who developed symptoms within 8 days of a visit to the farm. Secondary cases were defined as laboratory-confirmed or clinical cases who had either not visited the farm or had an onset more than 8 days after the farm visit, and who either reported close contact with or were in the same class as a primary case.

A nested case-control study was conducted in order to identify behaviours or activities related to *E. coli* O157:H7 infection. Because many of the children visiting the farm were young, teachers and daycare operators were asked to provide information about field trip activities. The 5-minute telephone survey included questions about the class, field trip activities and hand washing behaviours.

Data from the case report forms and teacher surveys were entered into EpiData 2.1b databases⁽⁴⁾. Analyses were conducted using EpiInfo 6.04d⁽⁵⁾. Descriptive frequencies were run to determine demographics of the cases and the symptoms that they experienced.

Each case with a relationship to a class that had visited the farm was linked to that class. The numbers of cases associated with each class were calculated, and classes were categorized as either having experienced primary illness or not. Activities and exposures of the "ill classes" were compared to those of the "not ill classes" using the chi-squared test, odds ratios, Fisher's exact test, the Student's t-test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test. Stratified analyses were conducted to examine the presence of confounding or interaction. the general population, individuals reporting vomiting and/or respiratory

Results

The farm was open to the public from 1 October to 31 October 2003. Activities offered to classes included a presentation about pumpkins, a hay ride to and from a pumpkin patch, pumpkin picking, visiting a display of pumpkins, playing on an old wooden boat and visiting a petting zoo enclosure containing goats, sheep, ducks and rabbits. Temporary outhouses were erected for the month of October. Alcohol hand sanitizer dispensers were available in the outhouses; however, the dispensers were placed high on the inside wall, out of reach of some of the children. No running water or other hand washing/sanitizing resources were available and there were no signs recommending hand washing.

The fresh stool specimen from the goat was positive for *E. coli* O157:H7, with the same PFGE pattern as the laboratory-confirmed human cases. No other etiologic agents were identified in the animal stool specimens; routine ova and parasites and virology were negative.

Seventy-two students, chaperones and close contacts reported symptoms to public health authorities. Of these, 44 met the case definition with eight laboratory-confirmed and 36 clinical cases. One additional child who was not symptomatic but whose parent and siblings experienced symptoms submitted a stool sample. This sample was positive for *E. coli* O157:H7 and the child was considered a laboratory-confirmed asymptomatic case.

Of the 45 cases, 26 (58%) were primary cases and 19 (42%) were secondary. Onset dates ranged from 15 October to 8 December, with a peak from 27 to 31 October ([Figure 1](#)). All cases had epidemiologic links to the farm: 38 were associated with school field trips, six visited the farm with their families and one visited the farm with a social club.

Full Report at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/04vol30/dr3020ea.html>

Health Hazards of Petting Zoos Fact Sheet

According to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), kidney failure can occur and dialysis and transfusions are sometimes necessary. Some who are sickened by *E. coli* bacteria must undergo surgery to have part of the bowel removed. Petting zoos across the United States have been responsible for sickening visitors—most of them children. According to the CDC, every year, tens of thousands of cases of salmonella and countless cases of *E. coli* are the result of casual animal contact. Experts warn that infections can spread through direct or even indirect animal contact; the area surrounding the animal's cage can be teeming with bacteria, and children can even bring it home on their clothing.

CASES

July 2005: Two children were hospitalized with *E. coli* infections following a visit to a petting zoo in Arizona. One child came into direct contact with the animals in the petting zoo; the second child may have touched railings around the animals' enclosures. Fecal samples from the zoo yielded *E.coli*, leading zoo officials to close the zoo as well as the adjoining play area.

June 25, 2005: The children's petting zoo at the Toledo Zoo was closed indefinitely after three animals tested positive for campylobacter, an infectious bacteria that causes gastrointestinal illness.

April 8, 2005: An outbreak of *E. coli* bacteria in Florida was definitively linked to animals from petting zoos at three fairs. Twenty-six people were confirmed stricken with the *E.coli* infection, including 23 children. Epidemiologists matched DNA from *E. coli* bacteria in six animals – two goats, two sheep and two cows -- to the DNA in the bacteria contracted by the victims. The six animals were all from the same company, Ag-Venture Farm Shows.

March 2005: A number of children became critically ill, and several nearly died, after visiting petting zoos at fairs in central Florida. The Florida Department of Health confirmed 30 cases of *E.coli* infection (in addition to dozens of suspected cases), and definitively linked the outbreak to animals at petting zoos. Several children remained in the hospital for months, and may have permanent kidney damage.

December 16, 2004: State health officials reported 43 confirmed cases of *E. coli* and suspected 108 more cases in people who had visited a petting zoo at the North Carolina state fair.

September 9, 2004: Although vaccinated, a horse in the Phoenix Zoo's petting area died of West Nile disease. A bird at the zoo died of the same disease earlier in the year. No vaccination is available for humans to prevent the mosquito borne virus.

August 5, 2004: The Fossil Rim Wildlife Center was placed on quarantine by the Texas Health Department after a sheep in its petting zoo died of rabies. Two children had to undergo

painful rabies treatment. Health officials stated that the disease can be transmitted through saliva (e.g., when an infected animal licks a person's face or an area where there are fresh wounds or broken skin). Transmission also can occur if a person kisses an infected animal on the face or lips. Officials asked that zoo visitors contact them for possible treatment.

August 20, 2004: Canadian health officials issued a warning after six children became ill with suspected *E. coli* infections after visiting petting zoos in British Columbia. The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control warned that children under the age of six are especially vulnerable to complications from *E. coli* infections associated with close contact with animals in petting zoos (See page 7).

November 7, 2003: A 3-year-old girl and a 79-year-old man died after a 1999 outbreak of *E. coli* at the Washington County Fair outside Albany, New York. About 1,079 people were infected and 65 were hospitalized. In 2003, a class action lawsuit filed by 122 victims was settled for \$4 million.

September 10, 2003: Twenty-two people were hospitalized, including 12 children who developed kidney failure, after being infected with *E. coli* at the 2002 Lane County Fair in Eugene, Oregon. It was thought that the bacteria made contact with visitors' hands by way of the dust in the sheep barn. Eighty-two people were sickened.

August 16, 2003: The Philadelphia Zoo closed two petting areas after two children, ages 3 and 5, who visited the zoo came down with *E. coli* infections and had to be hospitalized.

August 27, 2002: An *E. coli* outbreak in Oregon, the largest in state history, sickened as many as 42 people who visited animal displays at a county fair. Four children were hospitalized, including three who had to be put in intensive care.

July 23, 2002: Three children had to receive kidney dialysis after being infected with *E. coli*. Health officials suspect that the children were infected after visiting a New Zealand petting zoo.

January 23, 2002: A 4-year-old girl had to undergo a kidney transplant after contracting *E. coli* at a petting zoo in the Philadelphia area. The girl was one of 16 children sickened in the fall of 2000 after visiting the facility. The girl's parents have sued the owners of the petting zoo.

October 25, 2001: An *E. coli* outbreak at an Ohio county fair sickened 41 people.

August 16, 2001: At least 25 people, including two children who became gravely ill, were sickened by *E. coli* infections after visiting a county fair in Wisconsin. Two hundred people reported symptoms associated with the outbreak.

July 27, 2001: After an *E. coli* outbreak sickened 67 children at a petting zoo in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, the Bethlehem Health Department issued strict regulations for petting zoos, including a prohibition on direct contact with animals.

July 2001: In response to the CDC's report on *E. coli* outbreaks at petting zoos, the New York State Department of Agriculture issued recommendations for petting zoos, including the recommendation that hand washing stations be made available to patrons, in an attempt to increase safety. The same month, the Washington State Department of Health also developed guidelines for petting zoos.

April 20, 2001: The CDC reported in its *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* that 56 people, mostly schoolchildren— 19 of whom were hospitalized—were sickened with *E. coli* after visiting two petting zoos—one in Washington state and one in Pennsylvania.

April 19, 2001: An Associated Press article stated that “about 70,000 cases of *E. coli* infection are reported in the U.S. annually, about 100 of them fatal. Transmission usually comes through food and water, but exposure to animals is also a significant risk.”

November 7, 2000: As many as 21 children were infected with *E. coli* after visiting a Pennsylvania petting zoo. Two children, ages 3 and 4, had to be put on kidney dialysis. The petting zoo operators' 4-day-old son died two months earlier from a different strain of *E. coli*.

November 2000: Worcester, Pennsylvania: 61 children aged 1 through 10 were infected by *E. coli* 0157:H7 after visiting a farm. Eight were hospitalized and 6 developed kidney problems. The source of infection was traced to cows and calves at the farm.

August 2000: Cleveland, Ohio: 14 cases of *E. coli* 0157:H7 infection to a petting zoo at a county fair.

June 9, 2000: Four children became sick from *E. coli* after visiting a Washington petting zoo. Another contracted *E. coli* from a sibling who had visited the zoo.

Sept 1999 – London, Ontario: Approximately 160 kids got sick (see page 6).

August 30, 1999: As many as 650 people may have been exposed to rabies after having contact with a bear cub at an Iowa petting zoo. Several of these people had to undergo rabies vaccines. The bear cub later died of the disease.

July 1999: North Wales, UK: 17 cases of *E. coli* 0157:H7 were linked to a farm visit. Six required hospitalization.

April 8, 1999: A Michigan petting zoo was sued after a 5-year-old child became ill from a salmonella infection after visiting the facility with his school. The child's mother reported that the child lost 8 pounds and had to be hospitalized. Seven children from another school were sickened with salmonella after a trip to the same petting zoo.

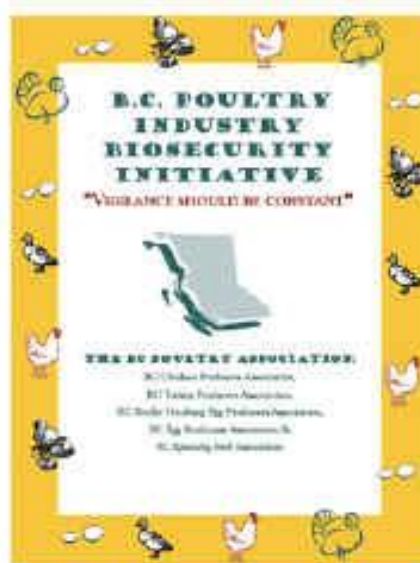
March 24, 1996: At least 50 people were stricken with a particularly virulent type of salmonella after visiting a petting area at the Denver Zoo. Eight of the victims had to be hospitalized.

Source PETA/Lifeforce - Updated January 11, 2006

2. Human Health Problems
b) Farm Related Health Hazards

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BioSecurity Manual Cover by BC Government



Poultry Workers

Visits to farms and to travelling petting zoos exposes people to known threats of the spread of pathogens. Farm workers are especially at risk of being infected and/or having health related problems. The pathogens can be transmitted from farm to farm and to public areas.

The BC Govt Management Procedures When Handling Manure (Appendix 11) states, “Poultry manure is a significant source of poultry and many human pathogens. Contact either directly or indirectly through aerosol or dust from manure can act as a significant biosecurity risk to the spread of disease from farm to farm. The agents of the spread of infection can be people, machinery, tools, vehicles, and environmental forces.”

Swine Workers

CANADA: new study reveals MRSA bacteria common among pigs and farm workers
(From a press release 2007)

A new study published in *Veterinary Microbiology* found methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) prevalent in Canadian pig farms and pig farmers, pointing to animal agriculture as a source of the deadly bacteria. The *Veterinary Microbiology* study (Khanna et al. 2007) is the first to show that North American pig farms and farmers commonly carry MRSA. The study looked for MRSA in 285 pigs in 20 Ontario farms. It found MRSA at 45% of farms (9/20) and in nearly one in four pigs (71/285). One in five pig farmers studied (5/25) also were found to carry MRSA, a much higher rate than in the general North American population. The strains of MRSA bacteria found in Ontario pigs and pig farmers included a strain common to human MRSA infections in Canada. An estimated nine million Canadian hogs will be imported into the United States this year. A study published last month in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) (Klevens et al. 2007) estimated almost 100,000 MRSA infections in 2005, and nearly 19,000 deaths in the United States. In

comparison, HIV/AIDS killed 17,000 people that year. Until recently, conventional wisdom had MRSA pegged as an opportunistic infection occurring mainly in hospitals. The JAMA study found that even healthy people are developing MRSA infections. The Veterinary Microbiology study points to pig farms as a possible source of these resistant infections, as have earlier European studies. Members of the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition (KAW), including medical, agriculture, and environmental experts, are calling for Congress to compel the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to study whether the use of human antibiotics in animal agriculture is contributing to the reported surge in MRSA infections and deaths in the United States. "Identifying and controlling community sources of MRSA is a public health priority of the first order," said Richard Wood, Executive Director of Food Animal Concerns Trust and Steering Committee Chair of Keep Antibiotics Working. "Are livestock farmers and farms in the United States also sources? We don't know for sure, because the U.S. government is not systematically testing U.S. livestock for MRSA." "Last summer, when we raised the MRSA issue, the FDA told us that it had no plans to sample U.S. livestock to see if they carry MRSA," said David Wallinga, MD, Director

MRSA found that of the 27 who tested positive, 23 were from the United States. In Europe, MRSA has been shown to be transmitted from pigs to farmers, their families, veterinarians, and hospital staff treating farm-infected patients. The same pig strain that was detected in Canada has been associated in Europe with serious human illness including skin, wound, breast, and heart infections, as well as pneumonia. The heavy use of antibiotics in industrialized livestock operations can select for resistant bacteria, such as MRSA. A study in Europe documented that pig farms routinely using antibiotics were more likely to have MRSA than farms with limited antibiotics use. Proposed federal legislation, The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act, sponsored by Senate Health Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Senators Olympia Snowe (R- ME), Susan Collins (R-ME), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Jack Reed (D-RI) in the Senate (S. 549) and Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), the only microbiologist in Congress, and 34 other House members in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 962), would phase out the use of antibiotics that are important in human medicine as animal feed additives within two years. The American Medical Association, the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the American Academy of Pediatrics are among the more than 350 advocacy groups nationwide that have endorsed this bill. Citation Khanna et al. 2007. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* colonization in pigs and pig farmers.

3. Animal Welfare Issues

3. Animal Welfare Issues



During Lifeforce's inspections we found numerous examples of animals being subjected to excessive physical harm and/or psychological stress.

Direct harm to animals was the continuous handling of animals. One chick was lifeless and rabbits were shaking with fear. Many animals were also chased and continuously harass with no area provided for escape – there was even a lamb with a broken leg being chased by kids. More detailed information is available in the section 6. Case Studies of Human/Animal Problems.

Indirect Harm resulting from putting animal babies in these for-profit situations includes the following:

1. At the Burnaby Days event the petting zoo owner sold a bunny that died later in the day at the purchaser's home. Dr. Anderson, the owner/veterinarian, told Lifeforce that the rabbit was healthy. So if this was so then what happen? Was the animal healthy enough to be put on display? Was the animal mistreated and consequently died?

2. Most people are unaware that when the day is done (end of season) most of those cute, cuddly animals are shipped off to auction - - to be slaughtered for food. This was the case for the Aldor Petting Zoos and the owner even praised the auction that Lifeforce has documented many animal abuse issues.

Petting Zoo Guidelines are not mandated. Animal welfare and rights issues are not fully addressed. There is also a lack of proper supervision by trained staff. In some cases, such as the Hopcott Farms, there was no supervision.

Reporting to BCSPCA

Lifeforce found that the ability to immediately stop animal welfare abuses was either non-existent or problematic. In general the SPCA responses were not effective. This was due to jurisdiction issues, a complicated reporting system (cruelty or emergency case or animal health issue) and failure of SPCA to either recognize or take immediate action to prevent animal welfare abuses. For example, the lamb with broken leg was not immediately removed because the SPCA only advised to not display the lamb the following day.

An effective 24/7 Hotline is not available to report such animal problems.

4. Environmental Issues

4. Environmental Issues

In a comprehensive 400-page analysis, published in 2006, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) described the spiralling increase in greenhouse gases from livestock as "massive" and urged world governments to immediately address the problem. Together, livestock animals account for 20 per cent "of terrestrial animal biomass" – people and animals. Feed crops take 30 per cent of the world's arable land. Livestock command 70 per cent of the planet's agricultural land and 30 per cent of its entire land surface. **Directly and indirectly, livestock account for 18 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. That is more than "all transport" combined.**

There are numerous studies about the harmful wastes from factory farming causing pollution of water, ground and air. The following is one example.

Antibiotic Runoff

The New York Times | Editorial, Tuesday 18 September 2007

One of the persistent problems of industrial agriculture is the inappropriate use of antibiotics. It's one thing to give antibiotics to individual animals, case by case, the way we treat humans. But it's a common practice in the confinement hog industry to give antibiotics to the whole herd, to enhance growth and to fight off the risk of disease, which is increased by keeping so many animals in such close quarters. This is an ideal way to create organisms resistant to the drugs. That poses a risk to us all.

A recent study by the University of Illinois makes the risk even more apparent. Studying the groundwater around two confinement hog farms, scientists have identified the presence of several transferable genes that confer antibiotic resistance, specifically to tetracycline. There is the very real chance that in such a rich bacterial soup these genes might move from organism to organism, carrying the ability to resist tetracycline with them. And because the resistant genes were found in groundwater, they are already at large in the environment.

There are two interdependent solutions to this problem, and hog producers should embrace them both. The first solution - the least likely to be acceptable in the hog industry - is to ban the wholesale, herd wide use of antibiotics. The second solution is to continue to tighten the regulations and the monitoring of manure containment systems. The trouble, of course, is that there is no such thing as perfect containment.

The consumer has the choice to buy pork that doesn't come from factory farms. The justification for that kind of farming has always been efficiency, and yet, as so often happens in agriculture, the argument breaks down once you look at all the side effects. The trouble with factory farms is that they are raising more than pigs. They are raising drug-resistant bugs as well.

SOS: Global Warning

In order to reduce the impact of conventional factory farming to Global Warming we must not increase the production of animals by promoting farming and keeping animals in captivity.

5. Guidelines

5. Guidelines

a) BC Centre for Disease Control Guidelines



Petting Zoos and Open Farm Visits

What is it?

PETTING ZOO AND OPEN FARM VISITS INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

- What you can do BEFORE you or your children visit a petting zoo or open farm.
- What you can do at the petting zoo or open farm to decrease the risk of disease.
- Which animals spread diseases to humans?
- How are diseases spread from animals to people?
- Which diseases are spread from animals to people?
- What are the symptoms of diseases spread from animals to people?

Visiting a petting zoo or open farm is a fun and an educational event. However, contact with animals must be made in a safe way as rarely, serious diseases can be spread from animals to people. People at most risk of serious illness include children, pregnant women, the frail elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.

How do people get infected?

Which animals spread diseases to people?

Most animals in petting zoos and on open farms can spread disease to people including cows, goats, sheep, horses, rabbits, pigs and chickens.

What are the Symptoms?

Possible symptoms include diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever, bloating, and gas. If you or your children experience any of these symptoms following a visit to a petting zoo or open farm, see your doctor.

Who's at Risk?

How are diseases spread from animals to people?

Animals carry many types of germs in their intestines. These germs can spread from animals to people in the following ways:

- An animal's feces can get onto the soil, bedding and the animal's hair or fur. The feces can contain germs that can make people sick when people touch an animal or the area around the animal, and do not wash their hands after. Fecal matter can spread from hands to mouths through eating or sucking fingers.
- An animal's saliva or spit can also carry germs that can be spread when an animal bites, scratches or licks a person.
- Germs can be found in raw milk and on cow udders. People who milk cows can get germs on their hands which can then spread to their mouths.

Young children are most at risk of infection because they are more likely to put their fingers in their mouths, ingesting dirt and bacteria from their hands.

- Rarely, diseases including Q fever and toxoplasmosis can be spread when germs get into the air. This can occur when dust is stirred up that has been spoiled by infected animal waste, including birth fluids. For this reason, the public should not be involved in the birthing process.

How do I avoid getting this disease?

What you can do BEFORE you or your children visit a petting zoo or open farm.

- Read this information and give it to the people who are supervising your children.
- **Call ahead** to the petting zoo or open farm for the following information. You may want to visit the site before bringing a large group of children.
 - Are hand washing facilities available? Do they have liquid soap and paper towels?
 - Are there toilet facilities? Are they clean?
 - Will there be on-site supervision?
 - Are the animals on display healthy?
 - Is the eating area separate from the animal area?
- **Be prepared:**
 - Bring wipes and alcohol hand sanitizing gel with you. Use a hand sanitizer with 60% to 95% ethanol or isopropanol alcohol.

- If possible, eat before you get to the petting zoo or open farm, and not while you are there.
- Bring sturdy boots or shoes for the children to wear while in the petting zoo. This will help to prevent children from slipping and falling. If possible, at the end of the visit, children should change into a clean pair of shoes and then wash their hands to remove any dirt from their hands. Bag the dirty shoes and clean them at home.
- Make sure there is an adequate number of adults to supervise your children.
- **Teach children how to wash their hands properly:**
 1. Wet hands well with running water, and lather with soap.
 2. Rub hands together briskly for at least *20 seconds*, or the time it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice. Don't forget the palms, backs of hands, fingers, fingertips and nails.
 3. Rinse hands well under running water.
 4. Dry hands completely with paper towels. Do not dry hands on clothes.
 5. Turn off the taps with paper towel.

What you can do at the petting zoo or open farm to decrease the risk of disease

Supervise children and make sure they wash their hands. *properly*.

- When you and your children are in the animal areas:
 - Do not eat, drink, chew gum or smoke.
 - Do not let children lick their fingers or bite their nails.
 - Do not let children suck on fingers, crayons, etc.
 - Do not let children touch their faces or mouths.
 - Do not give children bottles, pacifiers or soothers.
 - Do not let children pick up things off the ground.
 - Do not let children kiss the animals.
 - Do not let children eat the animals' food.
 - Do not let children eat edible containers used to hold animal feed (e.g. ice cream cones).
 - Do not share human food with animals.
 - Do not participate in the birthing of an animal.
- When you and your children are in the eating areas:
 - Eat in designated eating areas that are away from animals and their areas.
 - Wash your hands before eating.
 - If animals such as dogs, cats or ducks are in the eating area, do not pet them. If you touch an animal, wash your hands again before eating.
- Wash your hands and your children's hands:
 - After touching or feeding the animals;
 - After touching an animal's cage;
 - After touching the ground or falling;
 - Right after leaving animal areas;

- Before eating or drinking;
- After cleaning and/or removing boots or shoes.
- If you or your children are injured:
 - Wash and bandage bites, cuts or scrapes.
 - Report injuries to the operator of the petting zoo or open farm.
 - Seek medical attention if the injury is serious or a wound gets infected or if your tetanus vaccination is not up to date.

referring url <http://www.bccdc.org/topic.php?item=124>

b) BC Health Files



BCHealthFiles

BC HealthFile #61b, December 2006

Petting Zoo and Open Farm Visits

Visiting a petting zoo or open farm can be a fun and educational event. Any contact with animals needs to be made in a safe way. Rarely, serious diseases can be spread from animals to people when simple precautions are not followed. People at most risk of serious illness include children, pregnant women, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.

Which diseases are spread from animals to people?

Some of the most common germs that can be spread from animals to people are *E. coli O157* and other *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Yersinia*.

For more information, visit the BC HealthFiles at www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm.

What are the symptoms of diseases spread from animals to people?

Possible symptoms include diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever, bloating, and gas. If you or your children experience any of these symptoms in the three weeks following a visit to a petting zoo or open farm, see your doctor or health care provider right away.

How are diseases spread from animals to people?

Animals carry many types of germs in their intestines. These germs can spread from animals to people in the following ways:

- An animal's feces or manure can get onto its hair or fur, the bedding or the soil. The feces can contain germs that can make people sick when people touch an animal or the area around the

animal, and do not wash their hands afterwards. Fecal matter can spread from hand to mouth through eating, sucking fingers, or putting toys that have been handled into the mouth.

- An animal's saliva or spit can also carry germs that can be spread when an animal bites, scratches or licks a person.
- When people milk cows germs can get on their hands and can spread when they touch their mouth.
- Rarely, diseases including [Q fever](#) and [toxoplasmosis](#) can be spread when germs get into the air. This can occur when dust that contains infected animal waste, including birth fluids is stirred up. For this reason, the public should not be involved in the animal birthing process.

Young children are most at risk of infection because they are more likely to put their fingers in their mouths, ingesting dirt and bacteria from their hands.

Which animals spread diseases to people?

Animals in petting zoos and on open farms that can spread disease to people include cows, goats, sheep, horses, rabbits, pigs and poultry.

What you can do before you or your children visit a petting zoo or open farm.

Read this information and give it to the people who are supervising your children.

Call ahead to the petting zoo or open farm for the following information. You may want to visit the site before bringing a large group of children.

- Are hand washing facilities available? Do they have running water, liquid soap and paper towels or hand sanitizer stations?
- Are there toilet facilities? Are they clean?
- Will there be on-site supervision?
- Is the eating area separate from the animal area?

Be prepared:

- Bring wipes and alcohol hand sanitizing gel with you. Use a hand sanitizer with 60 per cent to 95 per cent ethanol or isopropanol alcohol.
- If possible, eat before you go to the petting zoo or open farm, and not while you are there.
- Bring sturdy boots or shoes for the children to wear while in the petting zoo. This will help to prevent children from slipping and falling. At the end of the visit, children should change into a clean pair of shoes and then wash their hands to remove any dirt from their hands. Bag the dirty shoes and clean them at home.
- To keep your children safe and healthy, make sure there is an adequate number of adults to supervise your children.
- Do not bring toys into the animal areas.

Teach children how to wash their hands properly:

1. Wet hands well with running water, and lather with soap.
2. Rub hands together briskly for at least *20 seconds*, or the time it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice. Do not forget the palms, backs of hands, fingers, fingertips and nails.
3. Rinse hands well under running water.

4. Dry hands completely with paper towels. Do not dry hands on clothes.
5. Turn off the taps with paper towel.

What you can do to decrease the risk of disease at the petting zoo or open farm.

When you and your children are in the animal areas:

- Do not eat, drink, chew gum or smoke.
- Do not let children lick or suck their fingers or bite their nails.
- Do not let children touch their faces or mouths.
- Do not give children bottles, pacifiers or soothers.
- Do not let children pick up things off the ground.
- Do not let children kiss the animals.
- Do not let children eat the animals' food.
- Do not let children eat edible containers used to hold animal feed, such as ice cream cones.
- Do not share human food with animals.

When you and your children are in the eating areas:

- If animals such as dogs, cats or ducks are in the eating area, do not pet them. If you touch an animal, wash your hands afterwards.
- Eat in designated eating areas that are away from animals and their areas.
- Wash your hands before eating.

Wash your hands and your children's hands:

- After touching or feeding an animal
- After touching an animal's cage
- After touching the ground or falling
- Right after leaving animal areas
- Before eating or drinking
- After cleaning and/or removing boots or shoes

Supervise children and make sure they wash their hands *properly*.

For more information, see BC HealthFile [#85 Hand Washing for Parents and Kids](#).

If you or your children are injured:

- Be aware of injuries. Wash and bandage bites, cuts or scrapes.
- Report injuries to the operator of the petting zoo or open farm.
- Seek medical attention if the injury is serious or a wound gets infected.

c) Fraser Health Authority Guidelines



Let Children Enjoy Your Petting Zoo or Farm

A Public Health Message to Zoo Operators and Farm Owners

Your petting zoo or farm is designed to provide children and students with the joy of coming close to animals. You must remember, however, animals can carry diseases that can make humans ill, and proper precautions must be taken to ensure that the health and safety of all visitors are protected, especially children.

For your operation, the Fraser Health Authority recommends the following:

HANDWASHING:

- ◆ Staff/Volunteers must encourage all visitors to wash their hands after handling the animals and before consuming food or drinks.
- ◆ There should be a minimum of one handwashing station (see back page) with hot/warm water, liquid soap and paper towels immediately adjacent to the animal petting area. Washrooms in nearby stores or restaurants are NOT sufficient.
- ◆ Automatic taps and soap dispensers are recommended.
- ◆ Temporary handwashing stations should be installed when permanent facilities are not immediately available (see back page).
- ◆ The exit to the animal area should be controlled to ensure children pass by and use the handwashing facilities.
- ◆ Handwashing facilities must be accessible by all visitors, i.e. at the right heights for both children and adults or with raised standing areas provided for children (check to ensure setup does not present tripping or falling hazards).

OPERATION:

- ◆ The public should not be permitted access to any animal enclosure except under the direct supervision of trained personnel. These enclosures should be kept locked outside of regular business hours.
- ◆ Ensure that any manure is quickly and thoroughly cleaned up, and appropriately discarded. Straw and sawdust bedding should be replaced at least daily.
- ◆ Staff/Volunteers must report all animal bites or scratches, or other injuries resulting from animal contact to Health Protection Services with the Fraser Health Authority.
- ◆ No unpasteurized milk, dairy products or juices are to be offered to any visitors.

ANIMALS:

- ◆ Potentially dangerous animals should not be included in a petting zoo. Reptiles and amphibians are not recommended.
- ◆ All animals must be in good health, and any animals with diarrhea must be excluded from display immediately.
- ◆ All animals must have up-to-date vaccinations for diseases applicable to the region. Vaccination records must be readily available when requested by the Fraser Health Authority.
- ◆ All animals must have a friendly disposition, and must be comfortable with extensive petting or handling.

SIGNS:

Ensure signs are erected at the entrance of the petting zoo or farm, which should include the following messages:

- ◆ **Wash hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly:**
- ◆ **after touching the animals and**
- ◆ **anytime your hands get visibly soiled or dirty**
- ◆ **before having any food or drinks**
- ◆ **Parents/Adults should supervise the children's handwashing.**
- ◆ **Avoid touching your face and mouth before washing your hands.**
- ◆ **NO food or drink is to be brought into the animal contact area.**



Signs on handwashing should also be placed in appropriate

places (such as eating areas, entrances and exits) reminding visitors to wash their hands when leaving animal contact areas, before eating, and when leaving the farm or zoo.

HANDWASHING SINKS & TEMPORARY HANDWASH STATIONS

Number of Handwashing Sinks Required:

Estimate number of visitors, e.g. 30 people will leave a contact area every 15 minutes and each person will take 1 minute to wash and dry hands. The facility will therefore need 2 handwash basins (30 people x 1 minute divided by 15 = 2).

Temporary Handwashing Station Setup:

Temporary handwashing stations can be set up on-site using a water jug (equipped with a spigot that allows the water to run free, without having to hold open), a clean chair, a small dish basin, a five-gallon receiving bucket and a garbage container. Fill the water jug with hot water, set it on the chair on a counter, and then set the dish basin directly beneath the spigot.

The procedure for handwashing using this temporary set-up is as follows: turn the water on, wash hands thoroughly with soap, and then rinse under the running water. The dish basin is located directly beneath the spigot hereby catching all of the water. Dry hands with paper towels and then empty the dish basin into the five-

gallon bucket. Wipe the dish basin with the used piece of paper towel before discarding it into the garbage container. The handwashing station is now ready for the next person. (Note: The receiving bucket must be emptied into an approved sewage disposal system or sewer when it becomes full).

If you have any further questions regarding petting zoos and farms please contact your local health unit or Environmental Health Officer. For phone listings please check the blue pages under "Health" in your local phone directory. Alternatively you may wish to visit the Fraser Health Authority web site at www.fraserhealth.ca



There must be an adequate number of handwashing stations

Make sure all children wash their hands after leaving the petting zoo or farm, and before they eat



Our thanks to Environmental Health Services, Capital Health Department in Edmonton for sharing their material regarding Petting Zoos.

RECENT OUTBREAKS RELATING TO PETTING ZOOS AND FARMS

November 2000:

- ◆ Worcester, Pennsylvania: 61 children aged 1 through 10 were infected by *E. coli* 0157:H7 after visiting a farm. Eight were hospitalized and 6 developed kidney problems. The source of infection was traced to cows and calves at the farm.

August 2000:

- ◆ Cleveland, Ohio: 14 cases of *E. coli* 0157:H7 infection to a petting zoo at a county fair.

August 1999:

- ◆ London, Ontario: Up to 159 may have been infected with *E. coli* 0157:H7 after visiting a petting zoo operation in an agricultural pavilion.

July 1999:

- ◆ North Wales, UK: 17 cases of *E. coli* 0157:H7 were linked to a farm visit. Six required hospitalization.

d) NASPHV Guidelines

Compendium of Measures To Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2005

National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, Inc. (NASPHV)

Prepared by
NASPHV

This report has been endorsed by CDC, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, and the American Veterinary Medical Association.

The material in this report originated in the National Center for Infectious Diseases, Anne Schuchat, MD, Director; and the Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases, Judith R. Aguilar, Acting Director.

Corresponding preparer: J.B. Bender DVM, Co-chair, NASPHV Animal Contact Compendium Committee, University of Minnesota, Veterinary Public Health, 136F Andrew Boss, 1354 Eckles Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, Telephone: 612-625-6203; Fax: 612-624-4906; E-mail: bende002@umn.edu.

Disclosure of Relationship: CDC, the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV), our planners, and our content professionals have disclosed that they have no financial interests or other relationships with the manufactures of commercial products, suppliers of commercial services, or commercial supporters. This report does not include any discussion of the unlabeled use of a product or a product under investigational use.

Summary

Multiple venues encourage or permit the public to come in contact with animals, resulting in millions of human-animal contacts each year. These settings include county or state fairs, petting zoos, animal swap meets, pet stores, zoologic institutions, circuses, carnivals, farm tours, livestock-birthing exhibits, educational exhibits at schools, and wildlife photo opportunities. Although multiple benefits of human-animal contact exist, infectious diseases, rabies exposures, injuries, and other human health problems associated with these settings are of concern. Rabid or potentially rabid animals in public settings can result in extensive public health investigation and action. Infectious disease outbreaks reported during the previous decade have been attributed to multiple organisms, including Escherichia coli O157:H7, Salmonella, Coxiella burnetti, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, and ringworm. Such incidents have substantial medical, public health, legal, and economic effects.

This report provides standardized recommendations for public health officials, veterinarians, animal venue operators, animal exhibitors, visitors to animal venues and exhibits, and others concerned with disease-control and with minimizing risks associated with animals in public

settings. The recommendation to wash hands is the single most important prevention step for reducing the risk for disease transmission. Other critical recommendations are that venues include transition areas between animal areas and nonanimal areas (where food is sold) and that animals are properly cared for and managed in public settings. In addition, this report recommends educating venue operators, staff, exhibitors, and visitors regarding the risk for disease transmission where animal contact is possible.

Introduction

Contact with animals in public settings (e.g., fairs, farm tours, and petting zoos) provides opportunities for entertainment and education concerning animals and animal husbandry. However, inadequate understanding of disease transmission and animal behavior can lead to infectious diseases, rabies exposures, injuries, and other health problems among visitors, especially children, in these settings. Diseases called zoonoses or zoonotic diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans. Of particular concern are situations in which substantial numbers of persons are exposed to zoonotic disease or become ill, necessitating public health investigation and medical follow-up. A 2004 review identified >25 human infectious disease outbreaks during 1990--2000 associated with visitors to animal exhibits (1).

The National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) recognizes the positive benefits of human-animal contact. NASPHV considers that the risks of these contacts can be minimized in properly supervised and managed settings by using appropriately selected animals that receive regular health examinations and preventive care. Although eliminating all risk from animal contacts might not be achievable, this report provides standardized recommendations for minimizing disease and injury.

NASPHV recommends that local and state public health, agricultural, environmental, and wildlife agencies, and other organizations use these recommendations to establish their own guidelines or regulations for reducing the risk for disease from human-animal contact in public settings. Multiple venues exist where public contact with animals is permitted (e.g., animal displays, petting zoos, animal swap meets, pet stores, zoologic institutions, nature parks, circuses, carnivals, farm tours, livestock-birthing exhibits, county or state fairs, schools, and wildlife photo opportunities). Persons responsible for managing these venues are encouraged to use the information in this report to reduce risk.

Guidelines to reduce risks for disease from animals in health-care facilities and service animals (e.g., guide dogs) have been developed (2--4). These settings are not specifically addressed in this report, although the general principles and recommendations might be applicable.

Full Report at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5404a1.htm>

6. Case Studies of Human/Animal Problems

6. Case Studies of Human/Animal Problems

a) Petting Zoo/Farm Tours

i) Hopcott Farms, Pit Meadows, BC



August 28, 2007

To: Bob Hopcott, Hopcott Meats
From: Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce

This weekend Lifeforce, a Vancouver based ecology organization, inspected the petting zoo operation at your anniversary party of Hopcott Meats in Pitt Meadows. I could not believe that common sense health standards and basic animal welfare standards were violated. I advised you and Harry of our concerns but there was no immediate action taken.

First, while food was distributed where the animals were located, there were no signs up warning people to wash their hands after touching animals – especially if you are eating food. Lifeforce contacted Health Authorities and they were also shocked and concerned about people getting seriously ill with Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, Campylobacter; E. Coli or other bacteria. Further down the road at your other petting zoo at Meadows Maze there were proper signs and hand washing facilities. So you are aware of the health rules.

Secondly, no one supervised the public with the animals. In addition to other animals, there was a small carrying cage with five bunnies. The stressed bunnies were repeatedly grabbed, handled and poked at by kids. When Lifeforce contacted Harry he added water and closed the lid but within twenty minutes the bunnies were harassed again. At Meadows Maze signs read “Do Not Pick Up Bunnies”. So you are aware of the animal welfare problems.

The lessons that should be learnt is:

1. That food and drinks should be kept out of all animal areas.
2. Signs should advise people to use soap and water to wash hands after touching animals.
3. A staff member be present at all times when animals are on public display.
4. The public should not have access to pick up bunnies and other animals because it can frighten and injure them.
5. The store area is not the proper location for a petting zoo and, at future events, people should be directed to the one at Meadows Maze.

We hope this information will help you protect both animals and people.

For further information:

Peter Hamilton
Lifeforce Director
Box 3117
Vancouver, BC
V6B 3X6
Email: lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com

ii) Aldor Acres – Based in Fort Langley with Travelling Petting Zoo in Surrey



September 17, 2007

To: Nindi Sivia, Fraser Health Authority
From: Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Foundation
Re: Petting Zoo Health Hazards

Please be advised that on Saturday, September 15, 2007 I found numerous health hazard potentials at a Petting Zoo operating at the Tynehead Community Hall, 9568 168 Street, Surrey, BC (info@tyneheadhall.ca). The Petting Zoo was operated by Aldor Acres, 24990 84 Avenue, Langley, BC (604-888-0788). The owner/operator is a veterinarian who should know the health protection standards.

In addition to the numerous animal welfare issues the potential health threats to people include:

1. No adequate hand washing facilities such as running water, soap and disposable paper towels were available. Petting Zoo staff squirted a hand cleaner on those leaving the animal pen but many just wiped it off on their clothing and/or did not know how to properly use such a cleaner.
2. No adequate signage on animal pen, other animal area and other areas to warn people to wash their hands after touching animals. Petting Zoo Rules that are sometimes found at permanent Petting Zoo locations were not posted. Later, there was one hand written sign attached to a box that was put on a chair but this was not clearly visible to all.
3. People leaned over the pen fencing to pet animals and staff did not give them any hand cleaner.
4. People with food were allowed in the pen where the animals were kept.
5. An adult donkey, a baby donkey and a lama were kept in another area near picnic tables where people ate food.
6. The lama was at one point walked around the property where people were eating.
7. The animals in this area (donkeys and lama) were petted without any staff present to advise them to clean their hands. (Note: at another location the next day the owner told me that the lama can spit at people).

8. One family was allowed entry into the pen with a toy truck. The toy was put on soiled areas including the grass where an animal had previously urinated. The toy was then given to the young child. At one point when I told the mom that the toy should be sanitized she rubbed her eyes with the hand that had touched the toy.
9. A very young child did not have any shoes or socks. At one point was the child was standing where an animal had urinated.
10. A child picked up what appeared to be animal food from the ground.
11. The baby donkey was roamed freely and bumped into people. At one point the animal nearly hit a baby carriage. At some times the donkey was kicking the hind legs.
12. A rabbit was sold to a member of the public and died later in the evening. Were the bunnies sick/diseased?

I took photographs and video to support the above disturbing problems. The Fraser Health Authority has two publications entitled "Have Farm at the Petting Zoo and Farm" and "Let Children Enjoy Your Petting Zoo or Farm". These publications state that proper precautions must be taken for the health and safety of all visitors. In fact, people are advised not to do what I observed.

Health officials have stated that Petting Zoos can be hotbeds of serious pathogens, including *E. coli*, and salmonella bacteria. Hundreds of people have been sickened and some have died. Also, people have had kidney failure dialysis and transfusions have been needed.

Please advise me of the action that you will take to protect people from potentially serious health problems that can result from contact with animals.

I also attach the letter that I sent to the Burnaby Health Inspector regarding the same business that was operating in Burnaby on Sunday September 16th.

I can be reached at:
lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com or 604-649-5258

Thank you.

iii) **Aldor Acres – Based in Fort Langley with Travelling Petting Zoo in Burnaby**



One donkey had a swelling on neck and was tied with a short rope that rubbed against the eye.

September 17, 2007

To: Steven Yeo, Fraser Health Authority
From: Peter Hamilton, Liferforce Foundation
Re: Petting Zoo Health Hazards

Please be advised that on Sunday, September 16, 2007 I found numerous health hazard potentials at a Petting Zoo operating at the Richmond Fair, Burnaby, BC. The Petting Zoo was operated by Aldor Acres, 24990 84 Avenue, Langley, BC (604-888-0788). The owner/operator is a veterinarian who should know the health protection standards.

In addition to the numerous animal welfare issues the potential health threats to people include:

1. No adequate hand washing facilities such as running water, soap and disposable paper towels were available. Petting Zoo staff squirted a hand cleaner on those leaving the animal pen but many just wiped it off on their clothing and/or did not know how to properly use such a cleaner.
2. No adequate signage on the animal pen and other areas to warn people to wash their hands after touching animals. Petting Zoo Rules that are sometimes found at permanent Petting Zoo locations were not posted.
3. People leaned over the pen fencing to pet animals and staff did not give them any hand cleaner.
4. People with food were allowed in the pen where the animals were kept. The owner of the Petting Zoo was even eating a hamburger in the animal pen and leaning over the fencing with a corn on the cob. This sets a very bad example.
5. An adult donkey and a baby donkey were kept in a transport trailer and the entrance was dangerously slippery.

6. One lady and girl was allowed entry into the pen with a stuff animal. The toy was grabbed by a goat by its mouth – contaminating the toy.
7. Several children were allowed entry into the animal area with only sandals and no socks.
8. Soft animal stools were picked up but some remained on the grass. Urine covered some grass areas.
9. Outside of the pen, a mother with a baby in a stroller was petting animals through the fencing and then touching her child. Staff did not advise her to wash her hands – I did.
10. A young girl was allowed entry into animal pen while chewing gum.
11. A llama was in pen area and was spitting/spraying. Owner said lama can spit at people.
12. The lama's back was dirty and animals are to be clean.

I took photographs and video to support the above disturbing problems. The Fraser Health Authority has two publications entitled “Have Farm at the Petting Zoo and Farm” and “Let Children Enjoy Your Petting Zoo or Farm”. These publications state that proper precautions must be taken for the health and safety of all visitors. In fact, people are advised not to do what I observed.

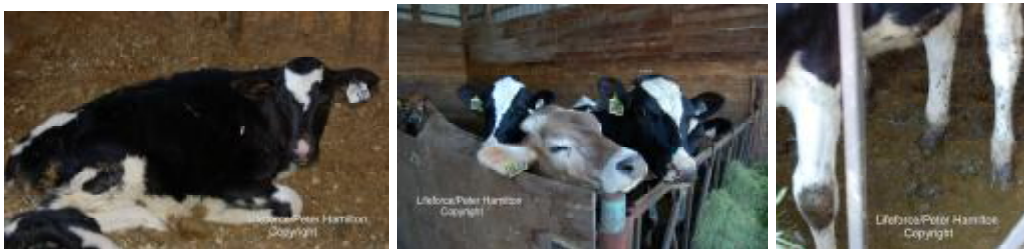
Health officials have stated that Petting Zoos can be hotbeds of serious pathogens, including *E. coli*, and salmonella bacteria. Hundreds of people have been sickened and some have died. Also, people have had kidney failure dialysis and transfusions have been needed.

Please advise me of the action that you will take to protect people from potentially serious health problems that can result from contact with animals.

I also attach the letter that I sent to the Surrey Health Inspector regarding the same business that was operating in Surrey on Saturday September 15th.

I can be reached at:
lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com or 604-649-5258

Thank you.



Note: Aldor Farms in Fort Langley

1) An inspection was also conducted at the Aldor Acres. The operator was given information and inspection checklist for safe operation of petting zoos. There were some handwashing stations available, however the operator was asked to provide more handwashing facilities and signage for the public.

2) Aldor Farms sell the babies animals at the end of October to Fraser Valley Auction for food slaughter.

iv) Chilliwack Corn Maze



September 28, 2007

To: Fraser Health Authority
From: Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Foundation
Re: Petting Zoo Health Hazards

Please be advised that on Saturday, September 22, 2007 I found numerous health hazard potentials at a Petting Zoo operating at the Chilliwack Corn Maze, 41905 Yale Road West, Chilliwack; Phone 604-823-4904.

In addition to the numerous animal welfare issues the potential health threats to people include:

1. There was no staff supervision.
2. Although there was adequate hand washing facilities such as running water, soap and disposable paper towels, there were no signs directing people to the station from the outside animal pens. There was a general lack of proper signage.
3. Petting Zoo Rules were not sufficient. The signs that were present were difficult to read.
4. People with food were allowed in the pen where the animals were kept.
5. A Boar goat was lethargic, quivered from time to time and was covered with diarrhoea. People were petting this animal. One toddler put her fingers in her mouth afterwards.
6. The diarrhoea from the Boar was on a white goat. This goat would frequently jump on kids and feces was transferred to the kids' clothes. Kids petted the goat animal touched the feces.
7. The inside petting area that the public enters was covered with feces and urine. People were not advise to wash their boots. One teen had no socks and wore thongs.
8. A platform on which people stood to watch animals in the indoor area was covered with feces on the surface. Some kids laid their coats on it.
9. Shoes with feces were not removed by some kids when they played in the "corn" sand box..

10. A child tried to feed animals with corn from the “corn” sand box..
11. The donkey roamed freely. At some times the donkey was kicking the hind legs.
12. No sign was posted at the Emu enclosure warning people that they could bite. One girl was bitten.

I took photographs and video to support the above disturbing problems. The Fraser Health Authority has two publications entitled “Have Farm at the Petting Zoo and Farm” and “Let Children Enjoy Your Petting Zoo or Farm”. These publications state that proper precautions must be taken for the health and safety of all visitors. In fact, people are advised not to do what I observed.

Health officials have stated that Petting Zoos can be hotbeds of serious pathogens, including *E. coli*, and salmonella bacteria. Hundreds of people have been sickened and some have died. Also, people have had kidney failure dialysis and transfusions have been needed.

Please advise me of the action that you will take to protect people from potentially serious health problems that can result from contact with animals.

I can be reached at:
lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com or 604-649-5258

Thank you.

v) Birchwood Dairy Farm



The Birchwood Dairy farm has an open farm tour with live-birthing displays, newborn calves and adult cattle. The “sick” animals are kept in a front exhibit area that is open to the public and there are no warning signs posted.

They also have a Petting Zoo coral where people can pet various types of animals but cannot enter the enclosures. There were no signs posted to advise people to wash their hands if they petted the animals.

One of the most bizarre problems that Lifeforce has witnessed during our inspections was a woman who would chew part of her ice cream cone, then pull it out of her mouth and feed it to a goat (video available). This could certainly be both a human and animal health concern.

There was a serious fly infestation in the calf barn.

vi) **Stanley Park Children's Farm**

Photos below are of the Fraser Valley Auction where Stanley Park petting zoo animals were sent to in the 80s.



Current Stanley Park Farmyard



The Stanley Park Children's Farmyard web site states that they have 200 animals, birds and reptiles; sheep, goats and pot belly pigs intermingle and reptiles can be handled under supervision. They also have "Rare Breeds Canada" – sheep, cows and waterfowl.

March 19, 2008

To: Vancouver Parks Board, Vancouver Mayor and Council and Vancouver Coastal Health
From: Peter Hamilton, Liferforce Director
Re: Stanley Park Farmyard

As stated in our previous letter "Please Stop Bunny Exploitation and Clean Up the Petting Zoo!" the following are details of numerous problems found during our 1.5 hour inspection on March 18, 2008:

Animal Problems

1. Seven bunnies were treated like props in an approximate 20" x 40" window display. It is not only cruel to keep them in such a small space with kids banging on the windows but it also promotes the purchase of such animals at Easter. The Park Board Easter Poster, March 21 – 24th, states, "All Day

Hunts...Meet the new Baby Bunnies, Goats, Lambs and Chicks.” After Easter when the novelty wears off they are often disposed of by such practises as illegal dumping in public parks.

The bunnies should be immediately removed from the window display. The bunnies and any other baby animals must be provided with large enclosures with private areas such as “dens” for the bunnies.

2. People did approach and petted animals in the “Rest Area” while three staff members were at the entrance gate and said nothing.
3. Hay was placed in a public area where goats and sheep would go. The animals would defecate in this area and on the hay. Any animal feed should be placed in receptacles on the wall.
4. Poultry, guinea pigs and rabbits were “housed” in the same areas and the poultry on top of the cages could defecate on the rabbits or guinea pigs below them.
5. In most cases, lone animals, such as a Dexter Cow and a Llama, are not recommended. They usually prefer the company of their own species.
6. A male pygmy goat was kept alone in a back pen and is only used for mating.
7. One lone male sheep in train area is used for breeding only.
8. All animal pen floors were concrete and such hard surfaces can caused leg and joint problems. This is especially a problematic if this is permanent with no access to soft ground. Although one Jacobs Sheep was old the animal had difficulties walking.
9. A lovebird appeared to have a neck injury. The head was constantly at a 90-degree angle. Injured birds and animals should not be on public display since the stress from constant public exposure could complicate the matter.
10. The Reptile room may promote people buying exotic animals. Buying exotics pose animal hardships and health risks. The sign above the turtles tank talks about in “choosing a pet turtle” but turtles aren’t “good pets” and may harbour salmonella bacteria.
11. Rabbits and guinea pigs in cages should be given more space and given dens (such as square plastic garbage cans) for privacy and security.

Human Health Risks

In addition, to the animal problems the “Farmyard” was contaminated with animal feces and urine that pose a major health threat to people petting the animals, touching gates and walking through the feces and pools of urine.

People visiting petting zoos must be aware of methods to prevent serious infections and illness. Liferforce has found that many operators try to downplay the threats to humans. Health Agencies can only suggest guidelines because there are no regulations. Petting zoos are hotbeds of serious pathogens, including E. coli and salmonella bacteria. Numerous children have been severely sickened as a result of visiting animal displays, and some have even died. Those who come in contact with E. coli can develop bloody diarrhea, anemia, chronic kidney failure, or neurological impairments such as seizures or strokes.

Problems include:

1. There were only 3 signs regarding Petting Zoo Guidelines. None of the signs provided all of the recommended guidelines. The sign at the entrance did not mention hand washing. It stated, "Keep fingers, toes, nose etc. away from animal mouths (Note re: toes: open footwear is not recommended). The other two identical small signs were on the two bathroom exterior doors but people did not read it.
2. Several kids were observed petting the animals and no one washed their hands. One girl played with her hair afterwards and put her hands in her mouth. One girl's jacket was continuously licked by goats but did not change jackets (goats can have mouth sores that are zoonotic).
3. Hay was placed in a public area where goats and sheep would go. The animals would defecate in this area and people would walk through the hay. Some kids even knelt down in the contaminated hay. Guidelines recommend a change of shoes and there should be a change of clothing if such contact is permitted.
4. A small sign advising that the turkeys will bite was not very noticeable and was too high for kids to read.
5. There was a sign in the back area saying "goats may eat strollers" but people used strollers throughout all areas. Strollers could become contaminated and harbour pathogens when taken home.
6. No signage at Silkie poultry pen advising people to wash hands.
7. Some of the outside fencing does not prevent kids from putting their arms through.
8. There were feces in water drain grating outside the building where the bunnies were kept.
9. Gates, such as the yellow inside gate, were dirty and should be sanitized on a regular basis. Some wooden gates may not be properly sanitized and should be replaced with non-porous materials.
10. The drain outside of the "Poultry/Rabbit" building did not properly drain urine. Other areas that were not presently open to the public and should be checked for similar drainage problems. Where does the animal wastes drain to? Is it connected to the sewer system?

Conclusion

Animals

The bunnies were obtained to be on loan from Aldor Acres in Fort Langley where they run petting zoos and breed animals to get the cute little babies to profit from. At the end of the season he sells the animals to the Fraser Valley Auction (FVA) that is a horrible place where sick, injured animals are routinely mistreated and killed for food. This is the same place where Lifeforce exposed the abuse of previous Stanley Park petting zoo animals in the 80s. At that time the Vancouver Parks Board agreed to stop auctioning them off. However, doing any business with animal dealers that dump the animals at FVA should also have been part of the prohibition.

People

Health protection measures should include more frequent hosing and sanitizing, adequate supervision, more signage with instructions to wash hands and change shoes/clothing and more hand washing stations (as per Fraser Health Authority and BCCDC Guidelines).

Staff informed me that there are only a few species now that are part of the Rare Breeds Canada program. Also, most of the males are neutered to prevent breeding. What is the status of your participation? What are the Board's policy on the types of animals displayed, their acquisition and their disposition? We would appreciate a list of all acquisitions and dispositions that you have records for.

We look forward to discussing ways to remedy these violations of animal rights and human safety. Please stop treating animals as commodities and please help protect people from health risks.

I can be reached at 604-649-5258 or lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com

i. Zoo

i) Greater Vancouver Zoo



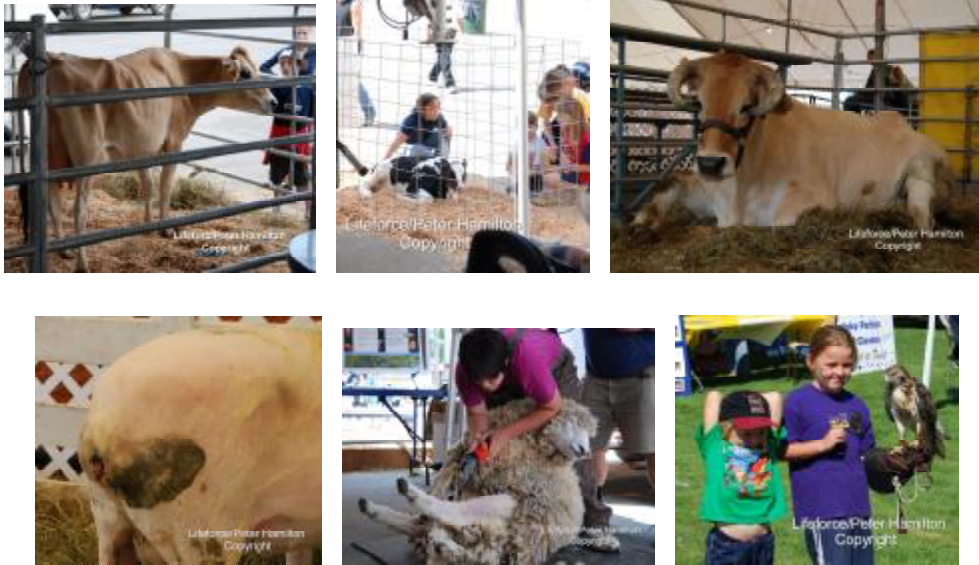
The Greater Vancouver Zoo in Aldergrove, BC has a number of species on display that can be petted by the public. One child was photographed touching the anus of a donkey. In addition to petting the animals, some of the animals licked objects such as a kid's scooter.

The jaguar would spray unsuspecting visitors.

There are no warning signs posted and no nearby hand washing facilities

ii. Agriculture Fairs

i) Abbotsford Agrifair and Rodeo



Some examples of problems documented by Lifeforce included the public petting a young Dairy calf and two cattle. There were no signs posted and no hand washing facilities. The young calf was on display for 3 days and was not provided with any overhead shelter/protection from the sun and weather.

The Cow and Horse Barns did not have sufficient signage. I only saw one at one sign at one entrance noticeable. Aldor Farms had a bull on display but no signage to wash hands. The sheep pens did not have any signage.

The sheep in these pens were not clean – they had feces on them. After sheep shearing the unclean wool was passed around to the audience.

Children were touching the “Birds of Prey” but were not advised to wash their hands.

ii) Chilliwack Exhibition



Some examples of problems documented by Lifeforce includes a mother and her piglets; poultry exhibits and rabbit displays. The pigs had no supervisor and no “handwashing” signs posted. The poultry and rabbit exhibitors had people in attendance but they did not advise people to wash their hands.

iii) **Other Businesses of Concern**

Other businesses that include petting animals are Aquariums (that have touch pools and petting of dolphins), Little Britches Rodeos, auctions, animal swap meets, pet stores, circuses (elephant rides), carnivals, educational exhibits at schools and Shopping Mall shows with wildlife photo gimmicks.

These businesses should also advise people of the health risks and how to try to prevent infections and illnesses.

7. Petting Zoo Bans

7. Petting Zoo Bans

As a result of disease outbreaks some businesses and government have restricted access to petting zoos. In London, Ontario there was no Petting Zoo in the year following their outbreak. In the US a Fair stopped them and a State Health Department stopped animal contact (see below)

In Sweden, the regulation issued by the Swedish Board of Agriculture addresses the prevention of zoonotic diseases. All farms that have a visiting type activity, like a petting zoo, have to develop a risk based hygiene control program. There must be an explicit requirement to take into account that children under the age of five are particularly sensitive to VTEC (Vero cytotoxin-producing E. coli). In practise this would mean that the conclusion of the risk management would be that children under should not be allowed to visit the farm.

London, ON, Canada

FAIR EXTRA CAREFUL TO AVOID REPEAT OF E. COLI PROBLEMS

London Free Press: Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your hands.

That, according to this story, is the message Western Fair officials will emphasize to visitors at the livestock exhibits this year in an effort to avoid a repeat of last year's E. coli outbreak. The story says that last year, about 160 people came down with intestinal illness after being in contact with a travelling petting zoo at the fair. The outbreak was traced to an infected goat and sheep in the petting zoo and not to any animals at the livestock exhibit. Western Fair community development manager Anne Eadie was cited as saying there will be no petting zoo this year, but patrons will still be allowed to pet the cattle, sheep and pigs at the livestock pavilion, adding, "We're taking huge precautions." They include: Signs everywhere at the pavilion and at the pony rides to encourage people to wash their hands after touching the animals. Wash stations with anti-bacterial soap will be located throughout the pavilion. Teachers supervising classes of children will be given a liquid soap canister for their young charges. All the animal pens will be washed daily. Children younger than five won't be allowed to participate in the milking demonstrations. E. coli generally spreads from mouth-to-fecal contact after touching an infected animal. Last year's outbreak left some children very ill with diarrhea and stomach cramps. Bryna Warshawsky, associate medical officer of health with the Middlesex-London Health Unit, was cited as saying that fair officials and the health unit have worked together to draft guidelines for sanitation around farm animals on exhibit and that she's satisfied the fair's precautions are reasonable but said visitors have to do their part by washing their hands with soap before they put their hands in their mouths and washing before eating.

North Carolina, US

No Petting Zoo? No Fair!

16.sep.05

GREENSBORO: The petting zoo at the Central Carolina Fair is, according to this story, no more at least for now. Several outbreaks of *E. coli* associated with petting zoos last year have all but ended the practice. UNCG freshman Brandy Lewellyn, of Summerfield was quoted as saying, "That's just not right. I grew up with a petting zoo. "It's a change, doctors and health officials say, that will potentially save lives. Last fall, 108 people contracted *E. coli* at North Carolina's State Fair. Fifteen of those cases, mostly young children, were life threatening. Many of those children, officials said, are still battling the disease and may need kidney transplants in the future. The story notes there have been cases associated with petting zoos across the country. Earlier this year, five children suffered kidney failure after visiting the petting zoo at a Florida fair. In 2000, 21 children fell ill after visiting a petting zoo in Pennsylvania. David Marshall, the state veterinarian for the Department of Agriculture, was cited as saying the disease has become more prevalent in recent years for several reasons, including improved diagnostic capabilities for identifying viruses/bacteria has allowed doctors to pinpoint *E. coli* as the problem, adding, "There's probably a lot more cases actually confirmed now, where in the past people kind of thought it was something they ate and it was never confirmed." And over time, he says, the bacteria evolves. During the past generation, it may have changed into the more harmful illness we are seeing today. Finally, physically, the modern population, surrounded by cars, cement and pesticides, just can't handle the disease.

Pennsylvania, US

July 27, 2001: After an *E. coli* outbreak sickened 67 children at a petting zoo in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, the Bethlehem Health Department issued strict regulations for petting zoos, including a prohibition on direct contact with animals.

8. Conclusion

8. Conclusion

The Public Health Threats

In 2007 Lifeforce decide to update our previous findings. We found that many animal business operators try to downplay the threats to humans. Animals can harbour a variety of diseases as shown in this report. These conditions pose very serious health threats to people – especially children. This would apply to other operations that could expose people to health that do not commonly follow petting zoo guidelines - zoos, aquariums, auctions, childrens' rodeo and agricultural fairs.

There are many health threats and Bio Security risks that cannot be prevented if children and others have contact with animals in petting zoos and on farm tours. This includes the need to change shoes and clothing because the animal pens where children are playing can be soaked with urine and remains of feces that are not picked up by brooms/shovels.

Lifeforce also found that proper hand washing methods are not adhere to – especially in the case of travelling petting zoos that use only hand gel. In a letter from Cheryl McIntyre, Associate Nurse Epidemiologist, BC Centre for Disease Control she stated, "The Guidelines recommend that petting zoos have running water (preferably warm water) and liquid soap and disposable paper towels available, and states " Hand sanitizing gels are not a substitute for proper hand washing and are not effective if hands are heavily soiled."

It should also be taken into consideration that if there are serious Bio Hazards among farmers working with animals, such pig and poultry, then it would follow that their petting zoos and farm tours would expose the public to such risks.

Lack of Reporting

a) People

During Lifeforce's investigation we found that there are only guidelines not regulations. In many cases these guidelines were not adhered and there was a lack of enforcement.

The Fraser Health Authority (FHA) is the responsible agency to report to in the Vancouver and Lower Fraser Valley area. They do have guidelines but these guidelines are not mandated. FHA inspectors can only recommend that operators follow the guidelines. There is no 24/7 hot line to contact FHA on weekends and holidays when many of these events take place.

Due to the lack of proper public education at the animal "encounters" Lifeforce believes that there may well be a lack of accurate statistics of related infections. The uniformed parents may go home and they and/or their kids may have nausea, diarrhea or other problems and not relate it to the animal contact. The Petting Zoos/Farm Tours businesses may well be a growing silent epidemic.

b) Animals

Lifeforce found that immediately stopping animal welfare abuses was either non-existent or problematic. In general the SPCA responses were not effective. This was due to jurisdiction issues, a complicated reporting system (cruelty or emergency case or animal health issue) and failure of SPCA to either recognize or take immediate action to prevent animal welfare abuses.

Legal Issues

Government and private businesses must not only look at their moral responsibility towards the safety of people and animals but need to recognized the legal ramifications if they do not take all appropriate measures.

As shown in one US case:

November 7, 2003: A 3-yearold girl and a 79-year-old man died after a 1999 outbreak of *E. coli* at the Washington County Fair outside Albany, New York. About 1,079 people were infected and 65 were hospitalized. In 2003, a class action lawsuit filed by 122 victims was settled for \$4 million.

Education

As stated, the proper signage and health information was usually not provided. If provided, the educational materials were not presented in the various languages represented by the various cultures in our society.

9. Recommendations

9. Recommendations

Based on the documentation in this report Lifeforce recommends:

1. A ban should be implemented on all Petting Zoos and Farm Tours.

Serious health hazards such as Bio Hazards that be transmitted by air and/or contact with animals cannot be prevented. Animal Welfare and Rights violations cannot be prevented. **Avoiding petting zoos is the best way to avoid the inherent cruelty and risk of disease transmission that could result in class action lawsuits.**

If these operations are not banned then the following actions must be taken:

1. Any operation of Petting Zoos or any other entertainment business where people are in contact with animals must be regulated by Provincial/Federal and State legislation.

This would also include all operations that could expose people to health that do not commonly follow petting zoo guidelines. This includes zoos, aquariums, auction, childrens' rodeo and agricultural fairs that include animal petting.

2. A 24/7 Hotline to report human health concerns.

Perhaps the present BC Nurse Line in which one can speak to a registered nurse 24-hours every day and has a translation service can be publicized and used.

3. A 24/7 Hotline to report animal problems.

4. Education Materials

Educational materials should be publicized and available in various languages on site and through various web sites/publications such as the BC Health Guide book. The information must emphasize that people should report all possible illnesses so present statistics would be improved.

5. Stronger animal welfare and rights protection incorporated into regulations.

This would include a prohibition on the sale of animals from events such as traveling petting zoos.

6. SOS: Global Warning

In order to reduce the impact of conventional factory farming on Global Warming we must not increase the production of animals by promoting petting zoos and keeping animals in captivity.

“The growing Petting Zoo business may well be a growing silent epidemic. People are usually not properly informed about the health risks and preventative measures. The children’s complaints of upset tummies, nausea or diarrhea may not be reported.

Lifeforce urges the government to ban Petting Zoos because health risks and animal welfare abuses cannot be prevented. If governments fail to ban Petting Zoos then all such activities must be regulated and enforced. This is the very least that must be done in order to try to reduce the health hazards and animal abuses.”

Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Founder