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Press Release: Hey Kids Don't Touch the Petting Zoo Animals Who May Make You Sick Before Being Slaughtered!

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 Petting Zoo operations in Metro Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

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. The pens where children play can be soaked with urine and remains of feces that are not picked up by broom/shovels.

Animals are continuously harassed and even sick animals may be on display. Problems included a lamb with a broken leg, a dying chick and kids petting animals covered with feces (from a sick goat with diarrhea). At the end of the season some operators send the animals to auction for food slaughter.

During Lifeforce's investigations we found that there are only guidelines not regulations for Petting Zoos. These guidelines are often not adhered to and there is a lack of enforcement. When advised of problems Health Inspection agencies can only recommend improvements.

"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, nausea 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." Stated Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Director, "If governments fails 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. Lifeforce will be sending our 55-page report "Petting Zoos: A Silent Epidemic?" to politicians and responsible agencies."

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