



NEWS RELEASE

Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

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BURSTEIN: WASH HANDS WHEN AROUND EXHIBIT ANIMALS

Health Commissioner Urges Common-Sense Approach to Diminish Chance of Infection

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein today issued a reminder for residents who will be coming into contact with animals at fairs and petting zoos to practice good hygiene by washing hands frequently and thoroughly.

“The cardinal rule when touching animals is ‘always wash hands’ and it is very important to do that,” **said Dr. Burstein.** “Many animals carry harmful bacteria, and don’t have to be sick themselves to be carriers. Some bacteria can live for months in animal bedding, on surfaces and flooring, and even on clothing and shoes that they come in contact with.”

An animal’s fur, skin, and saliva can harbor bacteria, which can then be passed to people who pet, touch, feed, or are licked by the animal. Bacteria from animals can also contaminate surfaces on toys, strollers, bottles, or other items that might be dropped on exhibit floors or come into contact with animals.

Bacteria responsible for disease outbreaks can include E. coli, Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, and Campylobacter. These infections can be severe, particularly in young children.

Burstein continued, “Inadequate hand washing is the usual common denominator in illness outbreaks from direct animal contact. After touching animals, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer, and be sure that children do the same. Taking these precautions will ensure that your family’s trip to the fair will be remembered as a fun and healthy one.”

Visiting a live animal exhibit can be fun and educational, but a few simple steps during and after can help ensure the benefits of experiencing animal contact aren’t overshadowed by resulting illness:

- Make sure to wash or sanitize your hands immediately after contact with animals
- Don’t eat in animal exhibit areas
- Don’t take food, toys, pacifiers, or baby bottles into animal areas. Consider leaving strollers outside as well, as these can pick up bacteria and later be a source of contamination for children.