



## Stay Healthy at the Fair

Mom was right: "Don't get caught with dirty hands!"

Reduce your risks of exposure to animal-transmitted diseases in petting zoos, fairs, and farms.

Interacting with animals can be a wonderful experience, both for children and adults. However, even healthy animals can carry bacteria and other organisms that can sometimes make people sick. People can catch these organisms where animals are present, especially when contact with animals is encouraged. It is therefore important that all visitors take precautions to avoid illness.



Hand washing with soap and water is the most important thing that can be done to prevent illness. Hands should be washed after leaving animal areas, even if no contact with animals occurred. Hand washing should also occur before eating and after going to the bathroom.

When in animal areas use the following precautions:

- Don't eat, drink or smoke.
- Supervise young children closely to make sure they avoid putting things in their mouths (thumb sucking, toys, pacifiers, spill proof cups and baby bottles). Put these items away when in animal areas.



Some people are at higher risk of getting sick from bacteria carried by animals. Some higher-risk people include:

- Young children under 5
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- Mentally impaired persons
- Persons with compromised immune systems

These persons should take higher precautions such as frequent hand washing, avoid animal contact and animal pens, bedding and manure. They should especially avoid young poultry, reptiles, amphibians and ill animals.

The primary mode of transmission is hand to mouth after touching animals' fur, hair, skin and saliva that has become contaminated with fecal organisms. It is then transmitted when a person pets, touches, feeds or is licked by animals. Then that person touches something that goes into their mouth.



Transmission can also occur by the contamination of food including raw milk, sticky foods and water, as well as contaminated clothing, shoes, animal bedding, flooring, barriers, and other environmental surfaces.

These animals may show no signs of illness and the bacteria can live months or years in the environment. Animals are more likely to shed bacteria because of stress induced by prolonged transportation, confinement, crowding and increased handling by people.

### Why is hand washing important?

Washing your hands is the simplest way to prevent the spread of infection. Proper hand washing techniques need to be practiced at all times, but especially when in contact with animals. Animals carry bacteria that lives in the intestines of humans, cattle, chicken, deer, sheep and pigs. This bacteria is shed by animals in their manure, and can contaminate their fur and living environment.



### Berrien County Health

**Department:**  
Preventing Disease,  
Prolonging Life and  
Protecting the  
Health of the  
Community.



### Bats, Bugs, and Bacteria

In July, the Health Department will focus on Bats, Bugs, and Bacteria (and some other things we will all encounter being outdoors in this hot summer month). Foodborne Illness Outbreaks, 4th of July Safety, Rabies, Lyme Disease, and Youth Fair will be highlighted this month. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at **926-7121**.

### Hand Washing 101

#### How to wash your hands

1. Wet hands with running water.
2. Place soap into palms.
3. Rub together to make a lather.
4. Scrub hands vigorously for 20 seconds. (or sing Happy Birthday to yourself twice)
5. Rinse soap off of hands.
6. Dry hands with disposable paper towels, not on clothing.

#### When should I wash my hands.

- After going to the bathroom.
- Upon exiting animal areas.
- Before eating.
- Before preparing foods.
- After removing dirty clothing or shoes.

#### What about hand sanitizers?

Hand washing is better, but sanitizers are a good substitute if soap and water are not available.

Hand sanitizers:

- are **effective** against some bacteria such as E.Coli, salmonella, campylobacter.
- are **less effective** - when hands are visibly soiled.
- are **not effective** against certain viruses.
- should not be used with water.

For more information, contact the Health Department at:

# 926-7121

*Special thanks to Pam Quinn for her help with this article!*

**The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:**

Benton Harbor		Niles		Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500		

**Or visit us on the web at [www.berriencohlthdept.org](http://www.berriencohlthdept.org)**

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