



A Guide to Healthy Animal Experiences with Young Children

Experiences with animals at home, in child care, and on field trips can provide great learning opportunities for children of all ages; however, even healthy animals can be infected with and spread potentially harmful diseases. Some diseases can be life threatening to young children, especially those less than 5 years of age. The following recommendations will reduce young children's risk of getting ill and help to ensure a healthy, educational experience.

Checklist for Pets in the Home:

- Check animals daily for signs of illness. Do not allow children to interact with sick animals. Treat your pets year-round with flea, tick, and deworming medications as directed by your veterinarian.
- Supervise animal interactions with young children.
- Keep animals out of food preparation and eating areas.
- Do not let animals urinate or defecate in children's play areas. Immediately remove feces from all areas accessible to children.
- Disinfect surfaces that come into contact with animals at least daily with regular household cleaners, such as bleach (use as directed on the label).
- Teach children to properly wash their hands for 20 seconds after handling animals. Assist children who are unable to wash their own hands.

Checklist for Visits to Animal Facilities: (such as petting zoos or farms)

- Do not allow children to sit or play on the ground in areas where animals are housed. Do not allow food, drink, pacifiers, or toys in areas where animals are housed.
- Feed animals only when contact with animals is controlled (e.g., when children are protected by a fence and under adult supervision).
- Don't put animal food in edible containers (like ice cream cones) which children may eat.
- If you are unsure whether hand washing sinks will be immediately available at the facility, bring hand sanitizers with over 60 percent alcohol content with you. Ordinary wet wipes do not kill germs.
- Some animal facilities offer food or drink. Always ensure dairy and juice products that are to be consumed are pasteurized. Do not eat or drink unpasteurized cider, raw milk, and products made from raw milk.

Animal-Specific Guidelines

- Children should not have any contact with dangerous animals (such as lions, tigers, and bears); non-human primates (such as monkeys and apes); animals at high risk of being infected with rabies (such as bats, skunks, and other wildlife); venomous spiders or insects; stray animals; or any aggressive animals.
- Children under 5 years of age should not have any contact with baby poultry (such as chicks, ducklings, and goslings); reptiles (such as turtles, lizards, and snakes); amphibians (such as frogs, toads, and newts); or ferrets.

Rules for Pets in Childcare Facilities (Iowa Code of Law Chapter 109.10(14))

- Animals kept in childcare facilities should be in good health with no evidence of disease.
- Animals should not pose a safety threat to children.
- Animals should be maintained in a clean and sanitary manner.
- Documentation of current vaccinations should be available for all cats and dogs.
- Pets should not be allowed in the kitchen or food preparation areas.
- No ferrets, reptiles (including turtles), or birds of the parrot family should be kept in childcare facilities.

For More Information Visit

IDPH Healthy Child Care Iowa at www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/default.asp

NASPHV Compendia at www.nasphv.org/documentsCompendia.html

CDC Healthy Pets Healthy People at www.cdc.gov/healthypets/