

## Links

More information on zoonotic diseases can be found at:

### Public Health Agency of Canada

Foodborne, Waterborne & Zoonotic Infection

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/zoono/index-eng.php>

### Ontario

Recommendations to Prevent Disease and Injury Associated with Petting Zoos in Ontario

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/petzoo/pdf/petting\\_zoos\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/petzoo/pdf/petting_zoos_report.pdf)

For more information, please contacting your Regional Veterinarian or the Animal Health Division.

Other information pamphlets are available online from the Department of Natural Resources at:

[www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/](http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/)

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# Health Risks from Handling Animals: Livestock Fairs



## Introduction

All animals carry diseases. In most cases, these diseases are only a health threat to other animals of the same kind. In some cases, however, these diseases can spread to humans, resulting in problems ranging from annoyance or slight discomfort to life threatening illnesses. A disease that spreads from animals to humans is called a **zoonosis** (plural **zoonoses**). In Canada, due to a cooler northern climate and well-developed health care and education system, the number of zoonoses that exist is not nearly as high as those in more tropical countries.

This pamphlet is the fourth in a series that looks at common zoonoses. The others are *“Health Risks from Handling Animals: Livestock Owners;”* *“Health Risks from Handling Animals: Hunters & Trappers”* and *“Health Risks from Handling Animals: General Public.”* In addition, there are also pamphlets available on certain specific diseases.

## Sources of Infection

The two common sources of infection when dealing with animals are from 1) contact with animals and 2) consuming contaminated or raw food products made from animal sources (such as milk, meat or contaminated water). These second “food-borne illnesses” will only be briefly covered in this pamphlet.

The types of contact with animals can be 1) direct, as in the bite from an infected animal (such as rabies) or touching an animal (such as one infected with ringworm); or it can be 2) indirect, where the person contacts infected body fluids (urine or saliva), manure, or inhales infectious organisms in the air.

## Examples of Zoonoses

Almost every type of animal has a list of diseases that it carries which may infect humans. Those commonly known to exist in Newfoundland and which might be encountered at a fair include (\* indicates that a separate pamphlet is available):

Animal	Disease	Means of spreading	Symptoms
Poultry & most other animals	Salmonellosis*	Hand-mouth contact.	Diarrhea
Cattle, Sheep, & Goats	<i>E. coli</i> infection	Hand-mouth contact.	Diarrhea, sometimes bloody, may be very severe (as in <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7)
Sheep & Goats	Q-fever*	Inhaling infected dust or contacting by hand.	Headache, fever, weakness, sometimes pneumonia.
Sheep & Goats	Contagious Ecthyma(ORF)*	Hand contact	Itchy, red, dry, scaly circular patches on skin. On animals they often appear as crusty, bald patches.
Most animals	Ringworm	Hand contact	Blisters that burst and turn into brown scabs, usually on hands or arms

## Minimizing the Risks of Illness

Depending on the disease, the actual ways of avoiding infection vary. However, the general recommendations for **operators of livestock fairs** are:

1. Have livestock owners review health status of animals with a veterinarian before admitting to fair to assure no obviously sick animals are entered;
2. Keep eating areas separate from animal areas;
3. Provide ample opportunities for the public to wash their hands;
4. Place signs to advise the public to wash their hands after handling animals;
5. If animals give birth during fair, keep them segregated from the public;
6. Do not allow young children to handle animals;

7. Do not allow children to enter petting zoos unattended;
8. Do not provide raw milk for public consumption;
9. Do not allow animals to become stressed by too much contact with the public or by leaving them on display for too long. Stress can increase the risks of disease spread.

Recommendations for **parents and guardians** (such as school teachers):

1. Make sure children do not eat while near animals;
2. Speak to children before entering the fair about the importance of washing their hands and not touching their faces after contact with animals;
3. Provide them with hand washing opportunities where appropriate; and
4. Educate them about animal diseases and the stresses that animals might go through if touched excessively.

For more information on human diseases or if you have any illness, please contact your family doctor or Community Health office. In addition, pamphlets are available on specific diseases of animals. These can be obtained on-line or by contacting the Animal Health Division.