



## Staying Healthy Around Animals at Fairs and Other Animal Exhibitions

When you interact with animals at farms, petting zoos, agricultural fairs, and other exhibitions this summer or fall, remember that even animals that appear healthy can carry germs that cause illness in people. The New Jersey Departments of Health (NJDOH) and Agriculture (NJDA) encourage you to stay safe around animals – for your health and theirs.

### Information on H5N1 Bird Flu

H5N1 bird flu is currently widespread in wild birds worldwide and has caused outbreaks in poultry and dairy cows in the U.S. H5N1 bird flu is a type of influenza virus different from human seasonal influenza viruses. There have been several human cases of bird flu in individuals across the U.S. who had close contact with infected dairy cattle or poultry.

While the risk of H5N1 bird flu to the general public is low, animals can carry other illnesses that can make people sick as well.

Anyone can get sick from germs that animals can carry, but certain people are more likely to get sick or have more severe illness and should take extra precautions at animal exhibits. These include:

- Children younger than 5 years old
- People with weakened immune systems
- Pregnant individuals
- Adults over 65.

### Tips to Stay Healthy & Safe for Adults and Children

- **Wash your hands** thoroughly with soap and water\* immediately after:
  - Touching animals or anything in their living area;
  - Handling animal food, supplies, bowls, or equipment;
  - Leaving animal areas, even if you didn't touch the animals; or
  - Touching or removing clothes or shoes worn around animals.

*\*If soap and running water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Wash your hands as soon as you can.*
- **Avoid hand-to-mouth activities (i.e., nail biting, eating, finger sucking)**
- **Do not touch or interact with animals that look or act ill.**
- **If you're sick, stay home.** Avoid spreading illness to other people or animals.
- **If you've traveled internationally within the last five days,** don't visit with livestock to prevent the spread of disease to NJ farm animals.
- **Prevent kicks and bites:**
  - Don't stand directly behind an animal and always approach with caution.
  - Don't put your fingers near an animal's mouth or grab their tails.
  - If bitten by an animal, wash the bite thoroughly and seek medical care.
- **Supervise children** when around animals:
  - Don't let children sit or play on the ground in animal areas.
  - Don't bring items such as toys or pacifiers into animal areas.
  - Children 5 years and younger should not have direct contact with reptiles, amphibians, or live poultry; these animals are more likely to make them sick.
  - Help children wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after interacting with animals.
- **Don't eat or drink in areas where animals live or roam.**

- **Don't share your food with the animals.**
- **Don't consume raw (unpasteurized) milk or soft cheeses and products made from raw milk.** The sale of raw milk directly to consumers is illegal in NJ.

### Tick and Mosquito Bite Prevention

- **Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.**
  - Find the right insect repellent: [EPA Search Tool](https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you) ([epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you](https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you))
  - Follow product label instructions and reapply as directed.
  - Apply sunscreen first and repellent second.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear light-colored, long sleeves and pants tucked into socks to prevent ticks from getting under clothes.
- **Shower after being outside** to wash off unattached ticks.
- **Check your and your child's body for ticks.**
  - Look under the arms, in and around ears, inside the belly button, on the back of the knees, in and around hair, between the legs, and around the waist.
  - Remove attached ticks right away using clean, fine-tipped tweezers. Grasp as close to the skin's surface as possible and pull upward with steady, even pressure. Clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Follow the CDC's [Tick Bite Fact Sheet](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/pdfs/FS_TickBite-508.pdf) ([cdc.gov/ticks/pdfs/FS\\_TickBite-508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/pdfs/FS_TickBite-508.pdf)).
- **Seek medical attention** following a known tick bite if you develop a rash, infection, fever, or other symptoms.

### Additional Resources

- CDC | Tips for Staying Healthy at Animal Exhibits - [cdc.gov/healthy-pets/about/staying-healthy-at-animal-exhibits.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/about/staying-healthy-at-animal-exhibits.html)
- NJDA | Animal Health - [nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah](https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah)
- NJDOH | Novel Influenza - [nj.gov/health/cd/topics/novel\\_flu.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/novel_flu.shtml)
- Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, NJ 4-H | 2024 County Fairs - [nj4h.rutgers.edu/fairs](https://nj4h.rutgers.edu/fairs)
- CDC | Food Safety, Raw Milk - [cdc.gov/food-safety/foods/raw-milk.html](https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/foods/raw-milk.html)
- NJDA | Biosecurity - [nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/news/biosecurity.html](https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/news/biosecurity.html)
- NJDA | 2024 Fair/Show Animal Health Recommendations, Regulations, and Forms - [nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/pdf/2024%20Fair%20and%20Show%20Letter.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/pdf/2024%20Fair%20and%20Show%20Letter.pdf)
- NJDA | 2024 Fair/Show Animal Health Recommendations Addendum: Biosecurity for Exhibition Dairy Cattle - [nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/pdf/2024%20Fair%20and%20Show%20Letter%20Ruminant%20Influenza%20A%20Addendum.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/pdf/2024%20Fair%20and%20Show%20Letter%20Ruminant%20Influenza%20A%20Addendum.pdf)
- CDC | Considerations and Information for Fair Organizers to Help Prevent Influenza - [cdc.gov/flu-in-animals/about/fair-organizers-information.html](https://www.cdc.gov/flu-in-animals/about/fair-organizers-information.html)
- National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians | Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings - [nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalsInPublicSettings2023.pdf](https://www.nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalsInPublicSettings2023.pdf)

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