



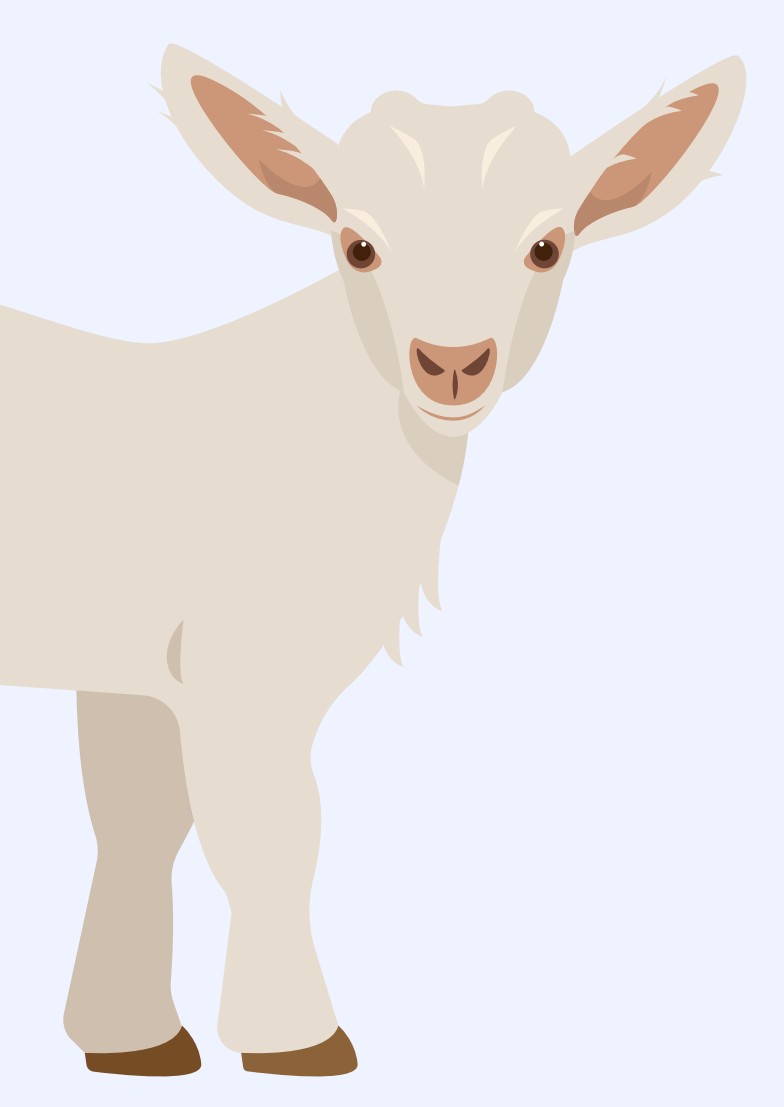
BE SAFE: BIOSECURITY EDUCATION TO SAFEGUARD ANIMALS AT FAIRS AND EVENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Animal exhibitions and events, including agricultural fairs, create value for livestock owners and the public alike. The comingling of large volumes of people and animals can be associated with zoonotic disease concerns that challenge human and animal health. Effective biosecurity practices before, during, and after animal events are essential to managing zoonotic risk and mitigating disease outbreaks. With support from Farm Credit Northeast AgEnhancement, University of Connecticut Extension developed and implemented the BE SAFE: Biosecurity Education to Safeguard Animals at Fairs and Events program in summer 2025.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



- Improve biosecurity awareness and practice amongst fair exhibitors, decision-makers, volunteers, and visitors;
- Develop resources to support the implementation of biosecurity measures in fairs and events involving animals in public settings;
- Support capacity-building and resilience within the agricultural community pertaining to zoonotic disease events through preventive action and education.

ACTIVITIES: SIGNAGE

Stay Healthy Around Animals

We can be exposed to illnesses when we interact with animals, other people, and our shared environment. When engaging with animals at fairs and events, practicing hygiene is a must!

WASH

hands with soap and running water or use hand sanitizer before and after interacting with animals.

AVOID

eating, drinking, smoking, vaping, and touching your face around animals and in barns.

ASK

before touching any animal. Avoid making contact with saliva or other fluids.

TEACH

children to not place contaminated items/hands in their mouths or make face-to-face contact with an animal.

NOTIFY

a handler or event manager right away if you are scratched or bitten by an animal.

AT HOME

wash all clothing, disinfect footwear, and sanitize items like phones, toys, and stroller tires.

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Farm Credit Northeast AgEnhancement

Signage was designed to inform visitors and exhibitors of best practices for human and animal health. Signage topics included:

- Restricted area warnings for wash racks, manure disposal areas, and animal quarantine areas;
- Hand washing reminders for barns and eating areas;
- Reminders that hoses are designated for animal use only.

An educational display was designed to equip event visitors with the knowledge needed to stay healthy when interacting with animals at fairs and exhibitions. Three water- and wind-resistant banners were printed and displayed at UConn 4-H fairs, Connecticut fairs, and The Big E at the Eastern States Exposition. The educational banner design was also converted into a printable rack card that was distributed at events and made available at UConn Extension Centers.

ACTIVITIES: BIO BOXES

Three biosecurity boxes were assembled and distributed to seven UConn 4-H Fair Associations with essential materials for animal exhibitions, including:

- PPE (i.e., gloves, gowns, boot covers)
- Cleaning equipment and supplies (i.e., spray bottle, pails, disinfecting wipes, sanitizer)
- Flashlight
- Waste management (i.e., sharps disposal container, garbage bags)
- Recordkeeping supplies (i.e., notebook, whiteboard, clipboard)
- Biosecurity resource binder, including BE SAFE signage, species-specific animal health checklists, and other salient publications



ACTIVITIES: FACT SHEETS

Ten peer-reviewed fact sheets and corresponding checklists were developed to guide animal exhibition personnel in conducting quality health checks. Resources focused on beef cattle, camelids, dairy cattle, dogs, equine, goats, poultry, rabbits and other small mammals, sheep, and swine. Two peer-reviewed fact sheets were developed for animal exhibitors, and an additional resource was published for fair visitor audiences.

HEALTHY INTERACTIONS WITH ANIMALS AT FAIRS AND OTHER ANIMAL EVENTS

Introduction: Fairs and other animal events can be memory makers for the whole family. However, it is important to understand how to keep yourself and family members healthy while engaging in agricultural events. This fact sheet is for people interested in learning proper hygiene practices for interacting with animals in public settings.

Zoonotic diseases are illnesses that can be transferred between people and animals. Examples include E. coli, Salmonella, and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (i.e., HPAI, Bird Flu). These diseases can pose health risks to people, especially those that are younger than 5 years of age, older and pregnant adults, and people with immunocompromising conditions. Zoonotic germs are naturally found in the digestive system of many animals present at fairs and other agricultural events, such as cattle, sheep, goats, and poultry. Livestock and poultry can shed zoonotic germs while still appearing healthy. Therefore, practicing healthy hygiene around animals is really important.

Tips for Staying Safe and Healthy

Germs can be transmitted in a number of ways, including via direct contact with infected feces, fur, and saliva, or with an contaminated surface such as a shared feed bucket. Follow these tips to protect your health.

BIOSECURITY BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR ANIMAL EXHIBITORS

Introduction: What is biosecurity and why is it important?

Biosecurity is a set of procedures to reduce the spread of illness from disease-causing agents such as bacteria and viruses. Zoonotic diseases can be transmitted between people and animals and are a considerable health risk for event visitors and exhibitors alike (Conrad et al., 2017). Examples of zoonotic diseases are rabies, E. coli, and Salmonella. Implementing biosecurity practices can increase the likelihood that animals, exhibitors, event personnel, and members of the public remain healthy and safe while engaging in agricultural events, and upon returning home. This fact sheet can be used by animal exhibitors to inform biosecurity decision-making before, during, and after an event.

What Can Happen If Biosecurity is Not Addressed?

Zoonotic diseases can pose serious health risks to people, especially those that are younger than 5 years of age, older and pregnant adults, and people with immunocompromising conditions, or who take immunocompromising drugs, like chemotherapy. These germs, also called pathogens, can cause symptoms ranging from fatigue, cough, fever, and even paralysis or death if not treated. Zoonotic diseases pose not only a threat to event visitors, but event staff and exhibitors as well. Many zoonotic germs are naturally found in the digestive system of animals present at animal exhibitions and other agricultural events, such as cattle, sheep,

ACTIVITIES: WORKSHOPS



During the grant period, five workshops were facilitated for multiple audiences, including youth, 4-H professionals, and 4-H volunteers serving in animal event contexts. One workshop engaging 35 youth and adults resulted in increased knowledge for over 95% of participants related to biosecurity importance; recommendations before, during, and after fairs; conducting animal health checks; and how 4-H fair associations can promote biosecurity. Furthermore, 91% of participants indicated they planned to use at least one biosecurity best practice that they learned because of the workshop. Tabling events were also operationalized to reach fair visitors with biosecurity education.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The project team is appreciative of the support of Farm Credit Northeast AgEnhancement in reaching program objectives. Future directions include adding to the biosecurity resource repository, such as professional development materials to continue biosecurity enhancement within fairs and animal events; delivering biosecurity education workshops in advance of the 2026 fair season; and enhancing the regional availability of BE SAFE resources for animal event participants and personnel.

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