

Common Zoonotic Diseases from Farm Animals

What are zoonotic diseases?

Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases that can be transmitted between animals and people.

What are some examples of germs that cause diarrheal zoonotic diseases?

- *Campylobacter* (bacteria)
- *Salmonella* (bacteria)
- *E. coli* O157:H7 (bacteria)
- *Yersinia enterocolitica* (bacteria)
- *Cryptosporidium* (parasite)

Is it common to find these types of germs on a farm?

Yes, some germs are naturally in the intestines of healthy livestock and poultry and are found in the animals' feces. Even if an animal appears healthy, it could still pass these germs to you. However, some germs, like *Cryptosporidium*, can also make animals sick.

How do people get sick from these germs?

People get sick from these germs by swallowing them. Once the germs are on your hands, you can accidentally get them in your mouth while eating, drinking, or during other hand-to-mouth activities such as smoking or thumb sucking. These germs may end up on your hands after contact with:

- Cattle
- Pigs
- Sheep
- Goats
- Ducks
- Chickens
- Turkeys
- Animal environments

Baby animals are especially likely to have these germs because they haven't had a chance to become immune to them.

What are the symptoms in people?

The most common symptoms are diarrhea and abdominal pain. Other symptoms may include vomiting, fever, cramps, and bloody diarrhea. People with mild symptoms usually recover without treatment.

However, these illnesses can lead to hospitalizations and severe complications also can occur.

How can I reduce my risk of getting sick from animals on a farm?

- Wash your hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds after having contact with farm animals or their environments.
- Wash your hands before you eat, drink, smoke, or chew (tobacco, gum, etc.).
- Keep food and drinks out of animal areas.
- Children younger than 5 years old should be supervised while interacting with the animals and during hand washing. Young children are more likely to get sick because they often touch surfaces contaminated with manure and are more likely to put their hands in their mouths.
- Wear dedicated work clothes and boots if you work on the farm.
- If you can, use work gloves if you are going to have direct contact with an animal or its manure.
- Wear a mask or face shield if you are performing a job where you could get splashed in the face, such as washing pens.

How can I keep from bringing these germs into my home?

Germs can stay on the clothing and shoes you wear while working or interacting with animals, and you can spread these germs to other people who haven't been on the farm. After you have visited a farm, remove your shoes before coming into the main part of the house and change your clothes once you are inside. If you live on a farm, it's a good idea to have a separate area to place your work clothes and boots so that you do not bring germs in the house. For workers that don't live on the farm, keep a set of clean non-work clothes and shoes at work so you can change before returning home. These steps will help reduce the risk of illness for you, and your family and friends.

For more information, please visit the Minnesota Department of Health website at www.health.state.mn.us or contact Carrie Klumb at

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651-201-5414. For more information on the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health (UMASH) Center, please visit the website at www.umash.umn.edu.