

Critter Visits

Critter Visits at Your Location.

Arrival: One of our Critter Buddies (with mask) will introduce themselves to the event co-ordinator or group leader and together they will review set-up. Hand Washing areas will be decided and discussed so all are aware.

Please check with your guests for the following:

Open wounds, such as cuts on hands or fingers, must be covered before entering the animal area or interacting with the animals. Strollers, food, backpacks, bottles, pacifiers, blankets and toys are not permitted in the waiting area or Critter Zone.

If there are pets at your location, they must be secured for the time we are on site. Staff will then prepare the Critter Zone. We ask that your guests stay away from our vehicle & animals and the Critter Area **as masks won't be worn during this time**. Waiting area and hand washing will be marked. Gates and enclosure surfaces which guests may touch will be sanitized. Guests will be washing their hands immediately prior to entering the Critter Zone (or getting into the Cart/Sleigh) and again, once they leave our area. Masks must be worn by guests during our time on site. You are welcome to take all the photos you wish with guests wearing masks.

During the Event: Our staff will be wearing masks once they explain the basic safety rules and directing guests in ways to hold the various breeds of animals. This will include safety with the Sleigh or Cart if applicable.

Guests must not place their hands in their mouth or near their faces from the time they wash hands on the way in to the time they wash hands on the way out of our area. Critter Visits staff will dismiss repeat offenders of **this important rule** and they will continue to watch from the outside of the gated zone, a few feet from the enclosure. Whenever possible, parents will supervise their own children around the animals.

We will disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as door handles/gates and remove soiled animal bedding and manure promptly. *Open wounds, such as cuts on hands or fingers, must be covered before entering the animal area or interacting with the animals.* Guests must report an injury (bite, scratch or a break to skin) that has occurred as a result of interaction with an animal to event staff. Our team has a first aid kit on site, and may temporarily close the area to apply first aid if necessary. We don't expect this to happen but we are ready just in case. Accidents do occur.

After visiting the Critter Zone: Once guests leave the enclosure, hands will be washed, even if you wore gloves and if you didn't touch the animals. Guests should thoroughly clean any items such as clothing, shoes that may have come in contact with soiled surfaces or fecal matter. **After you have visited with the animals, it is suggested that you change your shoes and clothing before entering your usual spaces. (stroller, vehicle, house)**

After the Event: Guests will be excused from the Critter Zone and are asked to stay away from this area and the vehicle so we can promptly put away the animals and tidy up any messes. We will do a final check of the area and say goodbye to the coordinator to acknowledge we are leaving the premises. The coordinator will be responsible for final clean up and sanitization to their personal satisfaction.

Critter Cards: We have souvenir cards for youth and parents as a reminder of their time with various animals that highlight the various breeds.



We have been advocates of hand washing around our animals since we first went "on the road" and continue that practice today.

With the current COVID recommendations by Provincial and Federal health ministries, we have published what we feel our clients should know. **Zoonotic diseases** are infectious diseases that can be transmitted between animals and people. Some examples of germs that cause diarrheal zoonotic diseases: • Campylobacter (bacteria) • Salmonella (bacteria) • E. coli O157:H7 (bacteria) • Yersinia enterocolitica (bacteria) • Cryptosporidium (parasite). 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.

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. **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.

To reduce risk

Wash your hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds upon exiting animal areas even if you did not touch an animal. Wash your hands before you eat, drink, smoke, or chew (tobacco, gum, etc.).

Keep food, drinks, baby bottles, pacifiers, and toys out of animal areas. Strollers and wagons are not permitted in the Critter Connections area. **Children** younger than 5 years old must 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 animal stool and are more likely to put their hands in their mouths. Germs can stay on the clothing and shoes you wear while interacting with animals and you can spread these germs to other people who haven't been with the Critters. These steps will help reduce the risk of illness for you, your family and friends.

Visitors who experience fever, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting **within a month after interaction** with our animals should consult a doctor.

GUESTS: Children 5 years of age and younger, people with weakened immune systems, and adults over 65 years of age are more likely to get sick from the germs animals can carry, and should take extra precautions. If you forget to wash your hands after petting an animal, or bring food or drinks into an area with animals, you increase your chance of getting sick. Even animals that look clean and healthy can carry harmful germs, and areas where animals roam can be contaminated.

You don't have to touch an animal to get sick.

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