

Several E. coli cases associated with petting goats at a Loudoun farm

Officials are saying that a number of individuals have been exposed who came in contact with the goats at Georges Mill Farm in Lovettsville.

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LOUDOUN COUNTY, Va. — The Loudoun County Health Department is asking the public to be on alert after several people experienced diarrhea and other illness symptoms after coming into contact with petting goats at a Loudoun farm.

Officials are saying that a number of individuals who came in contact with the goats at Georges Mill Farm in Lovettsville between March 6 and April 20, 2022, have been exposed to a specific type of bacterium, called Shiga Toxin, which produces E. coli.

“People should remember that, while animal interactions can be fun and educational, it’s always important to practice healthy habits around pets and other animals, such as washing your hands after being in contact with animals,” the health department stated, adding that they have already been in contact with those who had interacted with the goats.

The department said that anyone who had contact with these goats during this time frame and has not yet communicated with the health department should:

- Monitor for illness and seek medical attention if you become ill. Let your health care provider know of your possible exposure to assist in your diagnosis and treatment.
- Report your exposure to the Loudoun County Health Department by completing this [short survey](#).

Officials said that symptoms of E. coli illness usually start two to four days after exposure, but can occur as soon as 12 hours later, or as long as 10 days after exposure. Symptoms could include:

- Diarrhea with stomach cramps
- Blood in the stool
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Chills

More specific information on E. coli, including STEC, is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The department said that staff at the farm assisted them in identifying who could be at risk of illness and how to prevent future infections.

The department also confirmed that there is no evidence of ongoing risk to visitors at Georges Mill Farm, however, the farm has specified on their website that baby goat visiting and bottle feeding are closed for the rest of the year.

Health officials remind the public that there are steps they can take to help prevent contracting illnesses from animals. “Every year, many people get sick after visiting animal exhibits, such as petting zoos, aquariums, farms, or fairs,” they said. Preventive steps to take include:

- Wash your hands right after touching animals or anything in the areas where they live, roam or eat. Even if you didn’t touch the animals or wore gloves, wash your hands when you leave animal areas.
- Running water and soap is best, but if they are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol and wash your hands with soap and running water as soon as you can.
- Don’t eat or drink around animals and keep food and drinks away from animal areas.

Officials also added that 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 at animal exhibits.

Officials advise people to take these extra precautions for children:

- Always supervise children around animals.
- Leave items such as strollers, pacifiers, cups, or toys outside the exhibit.
- Don’t let children put their thumbs, fingers, or objects such as pacifiers in their mouths when they’re around animals or in an animal area.
- Don’t let children sit or play on the ground in animal areas.
- Teach children to approach animals with caution and follow the rules provided on signs or verbally by the staff.
- Children 5 years of age and younger should not have contact with reptiles, amphibians, or live poultry because these animals are more likely to make them sick. Parents of children in this age group should also consider not letting the children have direct contact with other types of livestock.

Source: [Petting goats expose group to E.coli at Loudoun Co. farm | wusa9.com](#)