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E. coli cases linked to pumpkin patch

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By FOX 12 Webstaff - email



LONGVIEW, WA (KPTV) - Cowlitz County health officials have confirmed one case of E. coli linked to a Longview pumpkin patch.

Investigators said there is also one probable case connected to the Willow Grove Gardens Pumpkin Patch and Petting Zoo.

The two children became ill after visiting the farm earlier this month. One of the children was hospitalized for several days but is now recovering.

The farm believes the children may have become ill by petting the animals and not washing their hands.

"A lot of parents don't understand how important that is and we can tell everybody that we see," said Michael McKee, who owns of the farm. "But there are still going to be those that slip through the cracks."



Signs reminding visitors to wash their hands are clearly posted near a sink by petting zoo.

"Hand sanitizer is not good at all," said McKee. "It doesn't kill a lot of the bacteria that is really, really harmful to the human body."

Health workers said E. coli is a bacterial infection that can cause issues like nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The infection can cause kidney damage and is sometimes fatal.

A fever is usually very mild or nonexistent.

Investigators said it is very easy for an animal to become contaminated. People can get the infection simply by petting the animal.

"You can get E. coli from any kind of an animal," said McKee. "But some types of E. coli are different than others. Some, a person's body might be able to fight off."

Anyone visiting a petting zoo or contacting farm animals should wash their hands with soap and water immediately after the contact.

Any children with E. coli symptoms should see a healthcare provider right away.

Parents of children experiencing those symptoms, especially if they've visited the Willow Grove Gardens Pumpkin Patch, are asked to call the health department, 360-414-5599.

The Cowlitz County Health Department provided the following safety tips:

- Anyone, children and adults, visiting a petting zoo or having contact with farm animals should wash their hands with soap and water immediately after any contact with animals. Supervise young children to ensure they wash their hands thoroughly.
- Check to see if a hand-washing station with running water is available before visiting the animals. If a hand-washing station is not available, do not have any animal contact. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer does not clean as well as hand-washing in these situations.
- If you have had contact with animals and discover that a hand-washing station is not available, be sure to use plenty of alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Keep rubbing until the sanitizer has evaporated, then wash your hands at the first opportunity and always wash before eating.

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