

For Immediate Release:

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Contact:

Jackie Vergerio 757-622-7382, ext. 8285; JackieV@peta.org

David Perle 757-622-7382, ext. 8410

**PETA WANTS STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO ISSUE
PETTING ZOO ADVISORY**

**Request Comes as New Studies Reveal That Washing Hands Is Not Enough to
Prevent Deadly *E. Coli* Outbreaks**

Tallahassee, Fla. — This morning, PETA sent an urgent appeal to Florida Secretary of Health Dr. M. Rony Francois urging him to immediately issue a public health advisory warning parents to steer clear of petting zoos because of the health risks that children who visit them may face. PETA's request comes on the heels of three studies presented in March at the International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases that dispelled the idea that hand-washing can adequately protect children from contracting *E. coli* and other dangerous infectious diseases from petting zoo experiences.

PETA reminds Dr. Francois that in 2005, at least 60 people who had visited petting zoos at the Central Florida Fair and Florida Strawberry Festival were sickened, and seven children contracted hemolytic urine syndrome—a sometimes deadly kidney infection—in an *E. coli* outbreak. A study following the Florida outbreak found that many of the patients contracted *E. coli* simply by touching soiled clothing and shoes and even sawdust or wood shavings near the exhibit.

PETA points out that it is unrealistic to expect that families visiting petting zoos will practice a degree of sanitation sufficient to ensure that all pathogens are removed from hands, clothing, strollers, and children's toys as well as other surfaces where they may lurk.

Petting zoos also pose another risk—to animals. Baby sheep, goats, pigs, and other animals are subject to mishandling and irregular feeding by the public. When the season ends, many of the animals are slaughtered out of public view.

“We're calling on Dr. Francois to take a hard line against these potential health hazards,” says PETA Director Debbie Leahy. “Petting zoos are a bad deal—for children exposed to pathogens and for animals.”

For more information, please visit PETA's Web site PETA.org. PETA's letter to Florida Secretary of Health Dr. M. Rony Francois is available upon request.

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