



Cowlitz County Health & Human Services Departments

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News Release

For Immediate Release:
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***E. Coli* Cases Linked to Willow Grove Pumpkin Patch**

Cowlitz County Health and Human Services is investigating one confirmed case and one probable case (laboratory confirmation pending) of illness caused by *E Coli 0157:H7* bacteria in children that visited 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.

E. coli 0157:H7 is a bacterial infection that can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea that may be bloody. Children with those symptoms should see a health care provider immediately. In addition, their parents should contact Public Health at (360) 414-5599. Infections can range from mild to very severe. The infection can cause kidney damage and is sometimes fatal. Fever is usually very mild or nonexistent.

Farm animals can carry *E. Coli 0157:H7* and can shed the bacteria in their stool even if they appear well. It is very easy for the animal hide to become contaminated. Children and adults can get the infection simply by petting the animal or by having other contact that could expose them to animal feces. Any touching of the eyes, nose, and mouth after contact with a contaminated surface including the animal is a major route of infection. Young children tend to put everything in their mouths, which increases the potential for illness. Other risk factors include eating, drinking, or using a pacifier while in the area where animals are housed.

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 contact. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is not a substitute for adequate hand-washing in these situations.. If you have had contact with animals and discover that 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.

Health officials are asking that anyone who may have visited the Willow Grove Gardens Pumpkin Patch and have any symptoms of E. coli illness such as diarrhea or vomiting, to contact the Cowlitz County Health and Human Services Department at 360-414-5599.

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