

## Lineham Farm Children's Centre – Activity Risk Assessment

**Activity: Animal Care**

**Location: Farm Yard and Surrounding Fields**

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>R</b>
Participants' known medical condition, e.g. asthma, hay fever, allergy	2	5	10	Check medical forms, relevant preventative medication to be taken before session, reliever medication to be carried at all times, e.g. asthma inhalers, epipen	2	1	2
Allergies – Unknown	2	2	4	If an allergy occurs please advise a change of clothes and shower the person. Child to be immediately moved away from the animals. School staff to contact parent/carer for consent to administer anti histamine. If symptoms persist take to GP.	2	2	4
Severe Allergic Reaction	1	5	5	If swelling or having difficulty breathing phone for emergency ambulance.	1	5	5
Animal Reaction	1	3	3	Ensure children know how to behave around animals. Ensure animals used have appropriate temperament for use with children.	1	2	2
Incidental Nips/Scratches/Trodden on etc.	3	3	9	Ensure children know how to feed/handle animals correctly. Fully supervise.	2	2	4
Climbing Walls/Fences	3	3	9	Inform children not to climb on things – supervise. Keep away from barbed wire.	1	1	1
Poisons/Animal Feed/Paint	1	5	5	Ensure poisons are locked away. Tell children not to taste animal feed/put fingers in mouths.	1	1	1
Tools	2	4	8	If tools are used ensure correct usage instructions have been given beforehand.	1	2	2
Weather Conditions	2	2	4	Ensure suitable clothing worn, provide waterproofs, provide sun-block/hats as appropriate	1	1	1
Lightning	1	5	5	See Risk Assessment 36 - Lightning	1	4	4
Zoonotic diseases eg E.Coli	1	5	5	Ensure children have protective clothing and that any cuts on their hands are covered with a waterproof plaster. Ensure hand washing prior to toileting and eating. Remove and isolate sick animals from contact areas. Pregnant women not to have contact with sheep. Ensure animals are kept in hygienic conditions to prevent bacterial build-up.	1	2	2
Moving farm vehicles	1	5	5	Children to be removed from dangerous location	1	5	5

Maximum Supervision Ratio: 1:8 + assistant (eg visiting staff) First Aid Kit Carried? No

Leader to have read HSE leaflet 'Preventing accidents to children on farms' and Farming and Countryside Education's code of practice 'Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions'.

Essential Safety Equipment: Waterproof clothing to protect child's own clothes, and wellingtons.

Other Comments: Be aware of strong winds and be prepared to avoid areas near woodland. Leader to carry a mobile phone.

**Reviewed 04.01.2018 Vince Foster/ Richard Penny**

**Reviewed 04/10/2019 T. Glindon**

## Review date (12 months or following any significant change or an incident)

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# **HSE information sheet**

## Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions – with supplement for teachers' and others who organise visits for children

### Introduction

1 This information sheet provides advice for those responsible for premises where members of the public, including children, are encouraged to view, touch or pet animals. Visits to these sites are primarily for recreational or educational purposes.

#### **Premises covered by this guidance include:**

- farm attractions e.g. open farms/farm parks;
- petting enclaves within other attractions (including those at zoos etc);
- city farms or other educational establishments;
- working farms with livestock that occasionally open to the public e.g. for school visits or to participate in "Open Farm Sunday" or similar events;
- rare breed and rescue centres;
- agricultural shows or country fairs where livestock are present;
- travelling menageries or mobile petting enterprises;
- other similar visitor attractions at which the public have contact with animals.

Whilst the general principles covered in this document are equally applicable to zoos, specific guidance on managing zoonotic disease (disease passed from animals to humans) in zoos is contained in '[Managing zoonotic risk in zoos and wildlife parks](#)' hyperlink to be added idc

**This guidance is issued by The Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and Safety Inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.**

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2. The information contained within this guidance is aimed at owners and managers of visitor attractions who have legal duties under health and safety law (duty holders). It describes the measures duty holders should take to protect visitors. Duty holders will also need to ensure that they comply with their legal obligations to protect the health and safety of their staff, including their employees, volunteers, helpers etc.

3. Teachers and others who organise visits should read the separate supplementary sheet which forms part of this advice, to help them make sure that children do not become ill as a result of visits. It may be useful to assist with the process of risk assessment which should be carried out before the visit takes place.

4. Visits to premises covered by this guidance play a valuable part in the education and development of children and young adults, and provide an enjoyable experience for many people. It is unusual for members of the public to be made ill as a result of such visits. However, there have been a relatively small number of serious cases of ill health reported as a consequence of visits to premises.

### Background

5 **All animals naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans, where they may cause ill health, which in some cases may be severe or life threatening.** Much of this guidance refers specifically to the verocytotoxin producing bacterium *E. coli* O157 because it poses a serious hazard to the health of people visiting such premises. *E. coli* O157 can potentially cause serious illness, especially in young children in whom symptoms may include bloody diarrhoea and kidney failure.

6 Cattle and sheep are the main recognised carriers of *E. coli* O157. The organism may occasionally be found in other animals, especially amongst the mixed species often present at visitor attractions. These include goats, pigs, chickens, horses, deer, llamas and alpacas. Farm dogs and wild rabbits can pick up the infection from an infected environment. Infection can also

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occur in birds such as wild geese. The organism is primarily transmitted through contact with their faeces (dung)

7 Another harmful micro-organism is *Cryptosporidium parvum*. This is a parasite carried by calves, lambs, deer and goats and can cause severe diarrhoea in young children and the elderly. It is capable of surviving for a long time in the environment.

8 People can become infected with *E. coli* O157 or *Cryptosporidium parvum* through consuming contaminated food or drink, through direct contact with contaminated animals, or by contact with an environment contaminated with animal faeces.

As with many other activities, visits to such premises can never be considered free from all risk. However, implementing the control measures in this guidance will help ensure that the risk of infection from *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E. coli* O157), from contact with animals is low.  
**'Hazard' and 'risk'**

Throughout this guidance the term 'hazard' is used to describe anything with the potential to cause harm and 'risk' used to describe the chance or probability of harm occurring coupled with its severity.

It should be assumed that animals at visitor attractions carry harmful micro-organisms such as *Escherichia coli* O157 (commonly known as *E. coli* O157 or VTEC) and *Cryptosporidium parvum*. Therefore, as with many other activities, visits to such premises can never be considered free from all risk. However implementing the control measures in this guidance will help ensure that the risk of infection from contact with animals is low.

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9 Very low numbers of micro-organisms can cause human infection and so it is important that those responsible for the premises control the risks to visitors.

#### **10 A number of essential control measures can help reduce the risk of people especially children, becoming infected through contact with faeces and faecal material.**

These include: good general cleanliness around the premises; including prevention of animal soiling on paths and walkways; containing animal bedding material within pens; the careful transporting and storage of manure; good animal husbandry; separating animal contact and noncontact

areas; provision of adequate hand-washing facilities; information for staff and visitors; and proper supervision of animal contact and hand-washing.

**11 Controlling the risks from *E. coli* O157 and *Cryptosporidium parvum* will also control the risks from most other organisms, which are transmissible to humans by the hand to mouth route.** Precautions against other types of zoonoses are covered by HSE Agriculture Information Sheet 2 (rev2) *Common zoonoses in agriculture*.

#### **The law**

12 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and associated health and safety regulations, place duties on a wide range of people (duty holders). If you open your premises to the public, including for charity events, you will have duties under health and safety law.

#### **Assessing the risk**

13 When undertaking your COSHH assessment you should:

- assume that all animals (including birds) carry micro-organisms such as *E. coli* O157 that could represent a hazard to human health. Animals carrying infection can still appear healthy;
- remember that ruminants (e.g. cattle, sheep, and goats) carry *E. coli* O157;
- take into account *E. coli* O157 is also found in a range of other animals including pigs, horses, donkeys, deer, alpacas, llamas, cats, dogs, wild rabbits, chickens and other birds;
- recognise that although tests are available to detect the presence of *E. coli* O157 and other micro-organisms a negative test result does not guarantee the animal is free of infection as infected animals do not shed the micro-organism all the time. Animals which have previously tested negative may begin to excrete the organism at a later date;
- acknowledge *E. coli* O157 may be introduced to your premises at any time by new stock, wild birds and animals, or by visitors;

#### **COSHH**

*E. coli* O157 and other micro organisms that may cause ill health are subject to The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 (as amended). These Regulations require an employer or self-employed person to:

- assess the risks to employees, self-employed people and the public from exposure to hazardous substances, including micro-organisms;
- prevent, or, where this is not reasonably practicable, adequately control exposure to the hazardous substances;

- introduce and maintain control measures;
- inform, instruct and train employees about the risks and precautions to be taken;
- inform visitors about the risks and precautions to be taken;
- regularly review the assessment and the effectiveness of control measures.

Guidance on COSHH can be obtained from the HSE website

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm>

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- bear in mind when selecting animals for petting areas that young stock, stock under stress, or stock unfamiliar with people etc are more likely to excrete *E. coli* O157;
- accept that other animals on the premises, including pets, may acquire the bacterium through contact with faeces etc.

#### Exposure to *E. coli* O157

14 You should assume that your animals carry *E. coli* O157 even though they have no symptoms. The organism can be spread to humans by hand to mouth contact, e.g. hands contaminated with *E. coli* O157 from faecal sources coming into contact with the mouth. Children, especially those under 5 years old, are particularly at risk as they are most likely to put contaminated fingers or items in their mouths (including thumb sucking, nail biting and dummies/toys). Only small numbers of the bacterium are required to cause illness, so just because something (an animal or an object) is not visibly contaminated with faeces, this does not necessarily mean it is free from risk.

15 People may become infected when they come into contact with animal faeces or saliva by:

- touching or kissing animals in petting areas or during bottle feeding;
- feeding, stroking or touching animals through gates or pens;
- touching gates, or animal pen divisions, or other structures contaminated with faeces;
- picking up contaminated feed from the floor;
- removing contaminated footwear or clothing;
- eating, drinking and smoking with contaminated hands;
- using contaminated play equipment;
- touching personal items taken on to the premises that have become contaminated e.g. dropped toys or dummies and pushchair wheels.

#### Controlling the risk

16 In order to minimise and control the risk you should concentrate on the following:

- establishing premises layout and routes, including areas to which visitors should not have access;
- defining, segregating and clearly identifying animal contact areas;
- defining, segregating and clearly identifying non-animal contact areas;
- defining, segregating and clearly identifying eating and play areas;
- providing adequate and suitable washing facilities;
- providing visitor information;
- providing information and signs for visitors;
- providing training and supervision of staff
- establishing livestock management procedures; including management of bedding and sick/pregnant/stressed animals;
- controlling manure/run-off and compost heaps.

#### Control measures

Control measures are actions that need to be taken to prevent or reduce exposure to a substance hazardous to health in this case micro organisms. Such measures include: the layout of the premises; the cleaning of the premises; provision and use of washing facilities; supervision; information; signage; etc. In practice, a combination of control measures will be necessary to protect the health of visitors. To be effective these measures should be practical, workable and sustainable. They should be reviewed on a regular basis.

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These are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

#### 17 Premises layout and routes

You should:

- decide which areas you want visitors to have access to;
- make sure that routes around the premises prevent visitors from entering non-access areas, e.g. parts of the premises where work is going on, or where manure is stored etc.;
- consider how you will prevent entry to non-access areas. For example, providing suitable

fencing and warning signs;

- direct visitors to washing facilities as they leave any animal contact area, before they access eating and play areas and before leaving the premises;
- avoid directing visitors across tracks or routes used regularly by stock and farm vehicles. If this is not possible then make sure visitors do not have to walk through any build up of faeces, liquid effluent, or soiled bedding material. For example, regularly clear or clean routes used by livestock or when cleaning out pens etc, and provide duckboards or similar so that visitors avoid contaminating their footwear;
- keep the premises as clean as practicable and ensure areas to which visitors have access are free from any build-up of faeces.

### **18 Animal contact**

You should:

- decide on suitable contact areas where visitors will be able to pet and feed animals;
- decide which animals are suitable for contact areas;
- not allow the public to enter animal pens (as faeces or contaminated bedding will underfoot and visitors may themselves carry infections on their footwear that could put your animals at risk);
- ensure adequate and suitable washing facilities are available and are used by visitors when leaving contact areas;
- ensure fencing and other barriers are regularly inspected and properly maintained;
- ensure that animal contact areas where visitors stand or walk are as free as possible from any faeces, and put in place measures to prevent contamination from liquid manure or surface run-off where necessary;
- regularly clean and disinfect pen divisions and gates as required in animal contact areas where visitors are able to touch them;
- not allow faeces to remain on and contaminate walkways or other areas used by the visitors;
- not allow contaminated bedding or run-off material to contaminate walkways or other areas used by visitors;
- ensure that eating (including sweets and ice cream), drinking, putting contaminated items in mouths (including dummies) and smoking are prohibited in animal contact areas (signs should be displayed instructing visitors of this requirement);
- ensure an adequate number of trained staff for contact areas;
- ensure where eating and play areas are adjacent to areas containing animals, measures are provided to prevent members of the public touching the animals, e.g. by providing double fencing. This should be positioned at a distance that will prevent visitors reaching through to touch the animals and to prevent animals reaching over or through the fence to contact people.

In some non-contact areas, it will not be reasonably practicable to provide double fencing along enclosures where animals are kept. Examples would be: livestock farms that open occasionally e.g. 'Open Farm Sunday'; and along a farm walk/trail through fields. In such cases the areas should be clearly signed to inform visitors they are entering a non-contact

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area and touching, petting and feeding of animals is not allowed. Eating and play areas should not be located within non-contact areas. Any decision to rely on single fencing and signage rather than double fencing must be justified in your risk assessment.

### **19 Eating areas**

You should:

- site eating or picnic facilities away from areas where animals can be contacted, and preferably at the end of any farm trail, walk or tour, or outside the main areas of the premises;
- make sure that visitors have to pass through or by washing facilities before going to eating areas;
- ensure visitors are advised, e.g. by adequate signage to wash their hands before eating;
- exclude your animals including captive birds from eating areas. They could contaminate eating areas with faeces. Consider wing clipping, double gates into eating areas and adequate fencing to exclude them;
- ensure where eating areas are adjacent to animal contact areas, animal contact must be prevented e.g. by providing double fencing. This should be positioned at a distance that will prevent visitors reaching through to touch the animals and to prevent animals reaching over or through the fence to contact people;

- provide adequate waste bins and clear discarded food from eating areas to discourage wild birds and rodents from feeding and contaminating the area;
- position ice-cream and/or sweet kiosks etc in the non-contact areas of the premises, such as the eating areas or at the exit where visitors have passed washing facilities, and remind visitors using the kiosks, by notices or verbally, to wash their hands before touching or eating purchased food or sweets.

## **20 Play areas**

You should:

- where possible site play areas away from areas where animals can be contacted, and preferably at the end of any farm trail, walk or tour, or outside the main areas of the premises;
- ensure visitors should be advised e.g. by adequate signage to wash their hands before and after using play areas;
- exclude your animals including captive birds from play areas. They could contaminate play areas and equipment with faeces. Consider wing clipping, double gates into play areas and adequate fencing to exclude them;
- ensure where play areas are adjacent to animal contact areas, animal contact is prevented e.g. by providing double fencing. This should be positioned at a distance that will prevent visitors reaching through to touch the animals and to prevent animals reaching over or through the fence to contact people;
- ensure play areas are cleaned on a regular basis to remove any contamination

## **Washing facilities**

21 While the primary control measures should focus on reducing and eliminating faecal contamination, the most effective method of removing dirt and contamination remains handwashing with soap and hot and cold or warm running water.

22 Washing facilities i.e. soap and running water should be provided at or near the exits from any area/premises where visitors are encouraged to have animal contact. **Cleansing wipes or anti bacterial gels are not an acceptable substitute for proper hand washing.**

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23 At temporary events, such as agricultural shows where there are suitable permanent washing facilities provided e.g. a purpose built toilet and washing block, it is acceptable practice for animal exhibitors or others to provide information and signs to indicate that visitors should use these facilities after contact with the animals. If such general visitor washing facilities do not exist or are not situated close by, then it will be necessary to provide suitable temporary washing facilities. Ideally washing facilities should be positioned close to areas where animal contact is permitted.

*Further guidance on the provision of washing facilities at agricultural shows is being discussed with the industry.*

24 The provision of adequate numbers of facilities and their location is crucial to preventing ill health. Facilities can be individual taps and basins, and/or long sinks with a number of running water outlets. They need to be provided and easily accessible at or near:

- areas for intentional contact (petting barns etc). If there is a one-way system for visitors through the contact area they should be provided immediately adjacent to the exit; if there is a two-way flow of visitors they should be provided immediately adjacent to entrances and exits. A one-way system may help to ensure that washing facilities are properly used;
- entrances to eating areas;
- the exit from the premises.

25 All washing facilities should:

- be accessible by all visitors, i.e. at the right heights for both children and adults or with raised standing areas provided for children. Check these do not create tripping or falling hazards;
- have running hot and cold or warm water (e.g. mixer taps). It is easier to create soap lather with warm water, and it may encourage visitors, especially children, to wash more thoroughly particularly in cold weather. Warm water supplies should be fitted with a means of restricting the temperature to no more than 43°C to avoid scalding;
- have liquid soap. Bactericidal soaps are not necessary;
- have paper towels. Hot-air hand-dryers are suitable but may lead to queues which discourage visitors from washing their hands. Reusable hand towels are not suitable;

## **Washing facilities**

An acceptable way of estimating the capacity of the washing facilities is to:

- estimate the maximum number of visitors expected or permitted at one time;
- consider how many visitors will be in animal contact areas at any time - you may already limit numbers of visitors in these areas to allow them time to enjoy the experience with the animals;
- assess the rate at which visitors will leave contact areas, e.g. in large groups such as school parties or a few at a time;
- estimate the time taken to wash hands effectively, remembering that a thorough hand wash may take up to two minutes.

If you estimate that, for instance, 30 people will leave a contact area every 15 minutes, and each person will take two minutes to wash their hands, you should provide enough washing facilities for four people to use at one time (30 x 2 divided by 15 = 4). Make similar calculations for other locations around the premises, e.g. at main exits or entrances to eating areas. You can supplement permanent facilities with temporary ones at busy times e.g. just before the summer holidays, in remote areas of the premises, or for short duration events e.g. country shows or fairs. Portable units can be hired which have heating, lighting and running water.

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- be properly maintained and cleaned regularly as required, at least daily;
- be replenished with paper towels and soap as necessary;
- include open or pedal operated waste bins which are emptied as necessary;
- be arranged so that visitor throughput and/or water overflows etc do not make the immediate vicinity muddy and so put people off using the washing facilities.

26 In exceptional circumstances, such as premises that open on an occasional basis in the summer providing cold running water only, soap and disposable towels may be acceptable. This must be justified in your risk assessment.

27 Do not provide buckets or troughs of standing water which are shared or reused by several people - they do not allow effective hand washing, and reusing water can spread microorganisms

among those using it. Adding a disinfectant to the water does not make the practice acceptable.

**28 It is important to encourage your staff, parents, teachers and others who have responsibility for visitors to make sure that children and other visitors wash their hands properly.**

#### **29 Cleaning footwear, pushchairs, wheel chairs etc**

You should ensure your planned layout will prevent contamination of footwear, pushchairs, wheel chairs etc, Where this unavoidably occurs you will need to consider providing suitable facilities to allow visitors to clean contaminated footwear and wheels on pushchairs and wheelchairs. The facilities should be arranged to reduce the risk of personal contamination from manure, liquid run off etc during the cleaning process.

#### **30 Visitor information**

Information should be provided to visitors covering:

- risks to health;
- precautions taken to minimise risks;
- personal responsibilities of visitors to minimise risks including hygiene precautions;
- site plan, map, route directions or other information as necessary.

The information should be included:

- on the attraction's website; and
- on site maps/plans or other handouts given to visitors on arrival.

Leaflets or pre-visit packs for schools and other organised groups should be provided to help teachers and others plan the visit.

#### **31 Information and signs**

- Information should include notices at all entrances to the premises to remind visitors of the need for good personal hygiene, and to inform them that they should only eat or drink in the designated areas.
- Consider handouts for visitors and stickers etc about hand washing.
- Signs should be erected in appropriate places reminding visitors to wash their hands when leaving animal contact areas, before eating, and when leaving the premises.
- Washing facilities should have signs showing how to wash hands properly.

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- Remember that young children may have dummies or toys that they put in their mouths. You should remind accompanying adults not to put dummies that have fallen to the

ground back into their children's mouths.

- Pictograms, audio devices, continuous loop videos or other media may be useful.
- Information should be clearly legible and may be required in languages other than English.

### **32 Training and supervision**

You should:

- ensure staff are trained and instructed about the human health risks associated with animals and the necessary control measures. Don't forget that training should also be provided for temporary or seasonal staff taken on during busy periods;
- ensure staff are trained and instructed on what visitors should or should not do;
- provide guidance to staff on how to explain the hygiene message to visitors including the importance of thorough hand washing, particularly for children;
- arrange adequate and appropriate levels of supervision in contact areas. The number of supervisors will depend on the size of the animal contact area and the number of visitors permitted or expected in that area at one time;
- make sure that children are supervised while they wash their hands. Although this is the responsibility of parents or teachers, in some cases staff may need to help in supervising;
- remind supervisors in animal contact areas (who may also be there to protect the animals) to ensure that visitors do not eat, drink or put items in their mouths while in these areas;
- ensure supervisors discourage visitors (especially children) from putting their fingers in their mouths, or kissing the animals;
- stress to your own staff the importance of following good personal hygiene, e.g. thoroughly washing their own hands when necessary, and not eating or drinking in animal contact areas.

### **33 Livestock management procedures**

You should:

- consider producing an animal or farm health plan in consultation with your vet to help reduce the risks from zoonoses;
- assess whether animals are healthy before moving them to animal contact areas, but remember that animals carrying *E. coli* O157 do not suffer ill-health effects;
- ensure that animals that have just given birth, or been born, are not put in contact areas;
- immediately remove any animals showing signs of ill health, such as diarrhoea, or stress from animal contact areas until they have recovered;
- keep animals and their housing clean;
- consider whether replacement stock can come from within the premises rather than being brought in (this would avoid new infections being inadvertently brought on to the farm);
- where possible, source replacement livestock (especially young animals for bottle feeding) from a reputable supplier with known health status where the stock-keeper will have ensured that they have received an adequate supply of colostrum after being born;
- try to minimise movement and mixing of animals from different groups (this is particularly important to minimise the shedding of *E. coli* O157 by ruminants such as cattle and sheep);
- check all animals on display regularly for evidence of illness, consulting your vet as appropriate;
- regularly empty and clean water troughs and provide the animals with clean drinking water.

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### **34 Manure and compost heaps**

You should:

- position manure or compost heaps well away from areas that visitors can access, or fence them off;
- prevent or contain any liquid run-off where this might contaminate visitor areas not allow visitors to bag their own compost or manure.

#### **Additional advice**

Further advice on *E. coli* O157 including a video on handwashing is available at:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/farmsafe/ecoli.htm>

#### **Sources of advice**

The National Farm Attraction Network (<http://www.farmattractions.net>), the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk>) Farming and Countryside Education (<http://www.face-online.org.uk>), and Farms for Schools

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(<http://www.farmsforschools.org.uk>) all provide advice and other services. Consider using the assurance or inspection schemes run by some of these organisations.

Where the premises are part of a commercial farm this will normally be HSE (<http://www.hse.gov.uk>); in other cases it will be the local authority for your area <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/index.htm>

Other advice is available from a number of other government websites including:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/>

<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

<http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/>

Advice can also be provided by veterinary surgeons (see telephone books for contacts)

#### **Further information**

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website:

[www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk) (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.)

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## **Avoiding ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions – Advice to teachers and others who organise visits for children**

This supplement advises teachers and others who organise visits by children on the precautions necessary to reduce the risk of ill health arising from contact with animals.

All animals naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans, where they may cause ill health. Some of these, such as the bacterium *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E coli* O157) or *Cryptosporidium parvum*, present a serious health hazard and have the potential to cause severe illness and health problems which may be particularly acute in young children.

As with many other educational or recreational activities, visits can never be considered free from all risk. However, while the hazards are real, the risk of infection in children can be readily controlled by simple everyday measures. The following practical steps will help make your visit even more safe, healthy and enjoyable.

#### **Before your visit, you should:**

- read and understand the advice in the main AIS23 information sheet, and discuss arrangements for the visit with the management at the site;
- confirm that the control measures provided at the site match the recommendations in AIS23;
- seek advice from your local authority or organisation on what the appropriate ratio of pupils to teachers/leaders/assistants/parents etc. should be;
- discuss and agree with the supervisors, parents or staff of the school, creche, leaders of youth organisations etc, their roles and responsibilities during the visit. In particular, they must understand the need to make sure that the children wash, or are helped to wash, their hands thoroughly after contacting animals. Key points to cover with the children should include:
  - o explaining the rules for the visit, stressing that they must not eat, drink or chew anything (including sweets) outside the areas in which you permit them to do so;
  - o explaining why they must wash their hands thoroughly after contact with the animals, and before eating or drinking anything;
  - o demonstrating how to wash their hands properly;

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- o discussing the requirements for appropriate clothing, including suitable footwear.

You should liaise with the attraction to ascertain what this is;

- o checking that cuts, grazes etc on children's hands are covered with a waterproof dressing.

#### **During and after the visit, make sure that the children:**

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- are reminded of the rules/precautions to take upon arrival at the site;
- do not kiss animals;
- always wash their hands thoroughly before and after eating, after any contact with animals and again before leaving the site;
- eat only food that they have brought with them, or food for human consumption they have bought on the premises, in designated areas, and never eat food which has fallen to the ground, or taste animal foods;
- do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons etc in mouths;
- where practical and possible, clean or change their footwear before leaving;
- wash their hands after changing their footwear.

Check that the children stay in their allocated groups during the visit, and that they:

- do not use or pick up tools (e.g. spades and forks) or touch other work equipment unless permitted to do so by site staff;
- do not climb on to walls, fences, gates or animal pens etc;
- listen carefully and follow the instructions and information given by the site staff;
- approach and handle animals quietly and gently;
- do not chase, frighten or torment the animals;
- do not wander off into unsupervised or prohibited areas e.g. manure heaps.

Remember:

- the children are your responsibility during the visit;
  - you should supervise them during the visit, especially during hand washing to make sure that each child washes thoroughly. Site staff may be able to help with this supervision;
  - allow plenty of time before eating or leaving so that the children do not have to rush.
- If a member of your group shows signs of illness (e.g. sickness or diarrhoea) after a visit, advise them or their parent/guardian to visit the doctor and explain that they have had recent contact with animals.

#### **Additional advice**

Further advice on *E. coli* O157 including a video on handwashing is available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/farmsafe/ecoli.htm>

Further information

Extra copies of this information sheet and supplement are available free from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 or can be downloaded from <http://www.hsebooks.co.uk>

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## **Introduction**

Agriculture has one of the highest fatal injury rates of any industry in Great Britain, but is the only high-risk industry that has to deal with the constant presence of children. Farms are homes as well as workplaces, and visitors, including children, may also be present on farms.

Children and young people up to the age of 18 are regularly killed and injured on farms, either because they are working on the farm or because they are playing there.

The ways in which children are killed varies little from year to year. The most common causes of death and major injury in the last decade were:

falling from vehicles; ■■

being struck by moving vehicles or objects; ■■

contact with machinery; ■■

driving vehicles; ■■

falls from height; ■■

drowning and asphyxiation; ■■

poisoning; ■■

fire; ■■

contact with animals. ■■

The children who died were:

being carried as passengers on agricultural plant and machinery; ■■

not under proper adult supervision; ■■

working/helping around the farm; ■■

playing unsupervised; or ■■

trespassing. ■■

For the main risk areas, this leaflet:

provides practical guidance on how to reduce the risk of injury to children under ■■ 13 and older children below minimum school leaving age (usually 16);

identifies tasks and operations that are too hazardous for children and young ■■ people to do and includes examples of incidents from real life – often involving a parent or grandparent killing their child.

### **Children under the age of 13**

Remember that, although parents are responsible for preventing their children straying or trespassing into areas where they may be at risk, all adults working in agriculture – employers, employees, contractors, or other visiting workers – must take responsibility for child safety.

**Health and Safety Executive**

# Preventing accidents to children on farms

Preventing accidents to

children on farms Page 1 of 16 This is a web-friendly version of leaflet INDG472, published 06/13 **Health and**

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### ***Identify what might put children at risk***

A 3-year-old boy was playing in the farmyard. A metal gate was propped against a workshop wall waiting for hinges to be fitted. The boy climbed up the rungs of the gate and it fell and crushed him.

You can become blind to risks you see every day. There can be risks to children that aren't risks to adults, such as an old gate left propped against a wall. When you are deciding what may cause harm to children, it may help to ask a safety representative, an employee, a friend or a neighbour to have a look at your farm – it's amazing what hazards and risks fresh eyes will see. Remember it is your duty to control and manage any hazards and risks identified.

You should also look at the fixed hazards in your farmyard, outbuildings and stores. These will include, for example, hung and freestanding gates, fixed and portable ladders, sheep-dip baths, slurry lagoons, grain silos, feed stores, propped machinery, machinery being maintained, cattle crushes, loft storage areas, silage clamps, barns, cattle stalls and glasshouses. Remember too that many accidents to children on farms involve moving vehicles.

Then run through your work year to identify the range of hazards that can arise, eg silaging, grain hauling and similar peak farm activity often coincides with the school holidays. For simple and practical guidance on assessing the risks on your farm and what you need to do to control them visit [www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/risk-assessment.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/risk-assessment.htm).

### ***Can children carry out simple tasks on the farm?***

Egg collection, for example, is often thought to be a safe and easy activity to allow children to do alone, but there may be dangers you have not thought about.

You still need to question what a task actually involves. For example:

Where hens are allowed to nest freely about the farm, where may children have   to go to look for eggs?

Will they need to climb up somewhere two-handed and climb down one-  handed?

Will they need to cross working areas where there are vehicle movements?

Will they need to enter animal pens?

Are younger children adequately supervised?

A 2-year-old boy was feeding hens with his mother, but he slipped away. She heard his voice coming from the chicken shed where he had gone to collect some eggs. He climbed onto the laying boxes which collapsed onto his chest.

### **Have you thought about everything which may cause significant harm?**

Take the following points into account:

Are there children living on or near the farm?

What arrangements can you make for children to be looked after if parents or   guardians are not available, eg because they are working in the field away from their children?

What activities or tasks on your farm might put them at risk?   **Health and Safety Executive**

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What work equipment do you use, such as machinery. Does the operator have ■■ clear vision around the machinery or from the driver's cab? Could you see a small child standing behind your vehicle?

What risks are there from the layout of the workplace, such as blind corners or ■■ slurry lagoons?

What areas on the farm might be especially attractive to children, such as bale ■■ stacks or animal pens?

What are the risks from hazardous substances such as bacteria and ■■ chemicals?

How do you organise and control work activities, including the age and ■■ responsibility of other workers? Do you use contractors, who may not be familiar with the risks on your farm?

Do children visit by invitation (eg to see friends or as a school party) or uninvited ■■ (eg exercising legal rights of access or as trespassers)?

Remember that children have only a limited awareness of risks and that may be both physically and mentally immature.

## **Manage the risks**

### ***Are there children living on or near the farm?***

If there are:

provide a securely fenced play area with enough activities to keep children busy; ■■

keep children away from farming activities and work traffic where possible; ■■

make sure everyone working on the farm knows that they should stop work ■■ immediately if an unsupervised child suddenly appears in the work area and take the child somewhere safe;

if the children are old enough, tell them about the dangers they should look out ■■ for and where they are not allowed to go;

put up warning signs in dangerous areas and make sure the children know ■■ what they mean.

If you use contractors who are unfamiliar with your workplace:

give them clear instructions about stopping work and making the area safe if ■■ unauthorised young people and children enter the work area;

ensure you have agreed with them the working areas and the steps to take to ■■ prevent unauthorised access by children;

tell them what to do to ensure the safe return of children to the control of an ■■ appropriate adult;

consider any language or cultural barriers when using migrant workers – they ■■ may not see the presence of children as a risk.

### ***Can I take my children to work with me?***

Childcare arrangements are difficult to organise for many parents. However tempting it may seem, taking them to work with you is not the solution. For example, it is illegal to carry children under the age of 13 in tractor cabs, but some parents still break the law. It is never safe to have a child in the cab.

In most years, farming work will lead to the death of at least one child at the hands of their own parent or a close family member. Most children under five who are killed in farm accidents are with an adult at the time. It is very difficult to supervise children, especially toddlers, when doing work that requires your close attention. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 4 of 16

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Driven by mum: A 2-year-old died after falling out of the back window of a tractor.

Driven by dad: A 4-year-old had been riding in the cab when her mother arrived in the field to take her home. As the girl went to join her mother, her father drove off and ran her over, killing her.

Driven by grandad: A 5-year-old fell out of the tractor door and was run over by a roller. The child had critical injuries but survived.

Driven by big sister: She got down to sort out livestock, leaving the keys in the ignition and the engine running. A 3-year-old left in the cab decided to get down too and died when becoming entangled in an unguarded power take-off (PTO) shaft.

***What about learning through experience?***

Health and safety regulation does not prevent learning through experience. It can be undertaken in a planned way with direct supervision. There is nothing wrong with a child watching what you do as long as:

the task itself is not inherently dangerous; ■■

the person doing the task is not the same person supervising the child; and ■■

the child is kept in a safe place. ■■

**When children are left to their own devices, provide a safe area or garden for them to play in. Farmyards are workplaces not playgrounds.**

## **Vehicles and machinery**

These present the greatest risk to children and are probably the areas of farm life most attractive to older children. The following are risks for which there are specific legal duties.

***Prohibition on driving vehicles and machines***

**It is illegal to allow a child under 13 to ride on or drive agricultural self-propelled machines (such as tractors) and other specified farm machinery while it is being used in the course of agricultural operations or is going to or from the site of such operations.**

***Prohibition on children riding on machines, vehicles or implements***

**It is illegal to allow a child under 13 years old to be carried on a tractor, self-propelled agricultural machine, or a machine or implement mounted on, towed or propelled by a tractor or other vehicle, including a machine or agricultural implement pulled by an animal, usually a horse.**

Children are not safe simply because they are in a cab – they can and do fall from cabs through doors which open accidentally, rear windows, or during emergencies. When they get out of the cab they are vulnerable to being run over by the machine as it moves off. Children can also present a risk to operators when they leave the driving position (eg to open gates) by working controls such as parking brakes, hydraulic levers etc, and they can distract the operator's attention in an emergency. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 5 of 16

A young girl fell out of a tractor cab as it drove on the road. The tractor went over a bump, causing her to lose her balance, strike the door handle and fall through the opening door. She needed 30 stitches in her head, fractured her pelvis, punctured her bladder and was temporarily paralysed.

An 8-year-old boy was being carried in his father's tractor cab along a farm track. The upper section of the cab door was secured but the catch to the lower section was missing. The boy was standing in the nearside foot well when the door opened unexpectedly and he fell under the rear wheel.

An 8-year-old boy and his two brothers were passengers in a tractor driven by their father. The tractor was towing a water ballasted roller. The boy fell from the tractor and received fatal head injuries when he was run over by the roller.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs or quad bikes) are considered to be self-propelled agricultural machines when they are used in agricultural operations. **It is therefore illegal for them to be driven for work by children under the age of 13. It is also illegal to carry a child as a passenger.** Look at the 'All-terrain vehicles' section later in this leaflet and HSE information sheet AIS33 for more information (see 'Find out more').

A 12-year-old boy drove an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). He swerved to avoid a ditch and the ATV toppled over. He fell off, was trapped beneath the vehicle and drowned in the ditch. The brakes were later found to be faulty.

A 5-year-old boy was sitting between his father's legs on an ATV. Travelling up a steep hill, the ATV hit a rabbit hole and both father and son were thrown from the vehicle. They were not wearing head protection. The father needed stitches to a head wound. The child's skull was fractured.

#### ***Riding on trailers***

**Children under 13 years old may only legally ride on a trailer, or on a load carried by a trailer, if there are adequate means, such as edge protection, to prevent them falling from it. You should adopt the same standards of protection if you carry older children.**

Suitable edge protection would comprise solid headboards, tailboards and sides at least 920 mm high, or guard rails. If guard rails are used they should:

be between 920 mm and 1070 mm high; ■■

have an intermediate rail between 460 mm and 535 mm high; and ■■

have a toe board at least 75 mm high. ■■

The guard rails may have movable or opening sections for access, but these should be closed when the trailer is moving, and should give the same degree of protection as the rest of the guard rails. Consider infilling the guard rails where a trailer is used for preschool children riding with casual workers or school children on tour.

Only carry unsupervised children if you and the driver are confident that they will obey instructions to remain seated. If children are expected to ride on a load then any sides must be higher than that load. To be effective they should provide the same standard of protection as the measurements given above. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 6 of 16

Never allow a child to:

ride on the drawbar of a tractor or trailer; ■■

ride on a trailer when materials are being loaded onto it and the trailer is in motion. ■■

HSE produces a free information sheet (AIS36) on carrying passengers on farm trailers (see 'Find out more').

Several children were being carried on a bale trailer. One was sitting with his legs dangling over the side of the trailer, and as it went through a gateway, one leg was crushed between the gatepost and the trailer.

A schoolboy was riding on the drawbar of a tractor/trailer combination when he fell off and was run over by the trailer nearside wheel. He died of internal injuries.

**HSE will enforce the law relating to child safety vigorously and will consider proceedings against anyone found breaking it. The law does not exempt parents and other relatives.**

### ***Moving vehicles***

Mixing vehicles and people is always a risk because of blind spots. Children are at particular risk because they may not be seen at all unless they are far away from the vehicle, eg from a telehandler a small child may not be seen if the boom is in its normal transport position. Many children are too small to be seen from a tractor cab if they are standing near to the tyres.

Remember to think about additional blind spots that may be created when you add on equipment. Would a carefully placed mirror help you see round the corner? Can you restrict pedestrian access? At busy times would a clear one-way system help?

Control the risks:

Always use the ■■ **Safe Stop** procedure when leaving a vehicle unattended, ie apply the parking brake, lower mounted equipment to the ground, stop the engine, remove the starting key and lock or otherwise secure the tractor.

Reduce vehicle movements, consider speed limits and avoid blind reversing by ■■ using a competent banksman or guide.

Remind drivers to make sure they can stop within the distance they can see to be ■■ clear – especially important around corners or when approaching obstructions.

Put up signs reminding drivers that children may be nearby and they should drive ■■ accordingly, and check that children are not in the area before getting into the vehicle.

A 5-year-old boy was killed when crushed under the wheels of a reversing vehicle. He was playing with other children in a farmyard, from which he was banned. The driver did not see the boy, even though he had been careful and observant and had used his reversing mirrors properly.

### ***Contact with machinery***

**It is illegal to allow a child under 13 years old to operate most farm machinery.** Children between 13 and 16 can safely use some machines, but only if they are properly trained, supervised and competent. See 'Children between 13 and 16' later in this leaflet for more information. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 7 of 16

Children are attracted to machinery and often fail to appreciate the dangers involved. Agricultural machinery that is used without anyone in attendance is therefore a particular risk. Keep unaccompanied children away from farm activities, and make sure that:

all machinery is properly guarded; ■■

you do not allow children to help you – a moment's lack of attention can result ■■ in tragedy;

you do not leave a child in, on, or near machinery, including tractors etc. ■■

A 9-year-old boy was pulled feet first into a forage harvester, losing a leg. He had been left unsupervised near the stationary machine which was left running.

## Falls

Children are naturally curious and adventurous, which often leads them to climb to the upper levels of buildings and high structures such as silos and bale stacks, or just to climb ladders through bravado. They also go into normally out-of-bounds areas when toys such as balls are lost. They may be injured or killed, eg when the structure gives way, when they cannot climb down as easily as they climbed up, or when they climb through or along guard rails provided for adults. Roofs which are normally inaccessible may be easily climbed on when, for example, the adjacent silage clamp is full.

An 8-year-old boy was playing with a farmer's son on the farm. For some reason they climbed onto the calf-shed roof, and the boy fell 3.5 m through a plastic roof-light. He died from a fractured skull.

Think about how you can stop children getting onto these structures. Consider:

making fixed ladders inaccessible by blanking the rungs (eg by securing a ■■ scaffolding plank across them);

removing portable ladders (including any removable lower section of a fixed ■■ ladder) so that they cannot be used to get into dangerous areas;

storing portable ladders so that they are chained/secured to prevent ■■ unauthorised use;

stacking bales, pallets etc so that children cannot climb up to otherwise ■■ inaccessible structures;

locking or otherwise securing buildings with high machines or equipment in ■■ them.

If a bale stack can be climbed, the key risks to consider are:

falling from and through the bale stack; ■■

the stack may be used to access other areas; ■■

crushing by falling bales; ■■

small bales used to make dens which may collapse; ■■

fire – consider ignition sources. ■■

An 8-year-old girl was playing on the farm bale stack, and when trying to climb down she fell about 3.5 m onto a hay tedder below. She died from severe head injuries.

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## Falling objects

When you do your risk assessment, look out for things around the farm that could fall on to children. Remember that children can be killed or injured by objects that might not cause serious harm to adults.

Take the following steps:

Secure, or lay flat, heavy items of machinery and equipment that could fall, so ■■ that they cannot fall and injure children. Pay special attention to gates, ladders and wheels.

Where stacks of bales, pallets or timber are stored, take precautions to prevent ■■ children climbing on them. If fencing is impractical, eg for a wood stack, build the stack, or use retention posts, so it will not collapse.

A 4-year-old boy was killed when a tractor dual wheel weighing 460 kg fell on him. The wheel was leaning unsecured against the wall of a barn.

A 6-year-old farmer's son climbed onto a gate that had been removed from its hinges. It overbalanced and fell on him, fracturing his skull and killing him. The farmer knew the gate was unsecured and that the boy was playing near it.

## Drowning and asphyxiation

Many child deaths on farms result from drowning in water, slurry or grain when children get into areas such as:

grain stores, silos, hoppers or pits; ■■

slurry stores or effluent tanks; ■■

irrigation reservoirs; ■■

sheep dips. ■■

As part of your risk assessment, try to put yourself in the position of a child. What would attract them to an area? Is it likely to feature in a game? Are there other reasons why they would go there? Do not:

underestimate the ability of children to get into seemingly inaccessible places; ■■

underestimate their curiosity; ■■

assume that because you would not wish to enter an area it would not be ■■ attractive to a child.

An 8-year-old boy was playing on the grain in the intake pit of a grain store when he was pulled down into it and asphyxiated. The pit was not fitted with a grid.

A 7-year-old girl was playing on her own in the farmyard near an uncovered full grain pit which was being emptied by an auger. The child fell into the pit and was drowned in the grain. She was dead when she was discovered.

A 1-year-old boy was playing with his brothers in a fenced area. He left the safe area, went into the farmyard and through an open doorway into a shed. He fell into a sheep dip bath which had been used earlier that morning. One of the covers had been left off and the boy drowned. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 9 of 16

A 9-year-old boy was suffocated in grass in a silage clamp on his father's farm. He was playing near the clamp and helping by opening the trailer tailgate. Despite being told to move away by his father, he continued to play in the area and was buried by the grass. To prevent such incidents you must stop children entering hazardous areas. Consider the following precautions:

Securely fence all lagoons, reservoirs etc with a child-deterrent fence to a ■■ height of 1.3 m.

Don't forget gates or other access points.

Securely cover all pits (eg grain pits and sheep dips) and manholes to prevent ■■ children falling into them. Grids with a maximum spacing of 65 mm are suitable.

Keep entrances to buildings containing silos, grain bins etc locked, except ■■ when work is going on.

## **Injury and ill health from animals**

Animals do not need to be aggressive to cause serious harm to, or even kill, a child. The dangers of mature cattle and horses are obvious, but sheep or pigs have caused serious injury, often when apparently playful.

The best way of reducing the risk from animals is to keep children away from them, or to allow contact only when they are **directly supervised by an adult**. If you take young children to see animals in the field make sure that they stay close to you and do not wander off among the animals.

Although there are good educational and developmental reasons for encouraging children to have contact with animals, never allow children, even when with an adult, to enter pens or loose housing containing:

any bull, boar, stallion, ram or stag; ■■

cows, sows, mares, does or ewes that have newborn young with them; ■■

any other animal that is known or likely to be aggressive. ■■

Children may be allowed to enter pens with docile female animals without young as long as they are directly supervised by an adult. If you want to show children young animals, make sure that both the animal and the child are outside the pen, or secure or remove the mother from the pen.

Keep children out of milking parlours unless they are directly supervised.

A 5-year-old farmer's son was helping to bring a cow and calf from the fields to the yard. He was knocked to the ground by the cow, which stood on his hand causing him to lose part of his thumb.

Animals can also carry diseases or organisms that can be passed to humans and cause illness (zoonoses). These include E. coli 0157, which may cause serious diarrhoea or worse, cryptosporidium which may also cause diarrhoea, orf, which causes skin lesions, Q fever, which causes flu-like symptoms and others. Farms and grain stores often attract vermin. Rats can cause illnesses such as leptospirosis. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 10 of 16

To limit the risk of children being affected by these diseases, make sure they do not:

contact any animal obviously suffering from illness or infection such as scouring, ■■ orf or ringworm;

put unwashed fingers in their mouths; ■■

eat or drink during or after contact with animals, faeces, or areas which animals ■■ have soiled until they have washed their hands thoroughly with soap and clean running water, using a clean paper or roller towel to dry them.

Thirteen children were treated in hospital after an open farm visit and handling livestock that carried the E. coli 0157 bacteria. They had sucked their fingers and eaten packed lunches without first washing their hands.

## **Hazardous substances**

Hazardous substances in agriculture range from pesticides and veterinary medicines, including sheep dips, to dairy chemicals and workshop degreasers. All these substances should be securely locked away at all times unless they are being used under supervision.

Never:

leave an unattended pesticide store open or unlocked; ■■

leave concentrated pesticide in any container other than the original; ■■

put diluted pesticide into any container that could be mistaken to contain any ■■ other liquid, such as a soft drink;

leave any sheep dip containing dipwash uncovered after use – if a child falls in, ■■ as well as the risk of drowning, there is a risk of swallowing the dipwash or absorbing it through their skin;

allow children to help treat an animal using hypodermic syringes. ■■

As well as man-made hazards, there are natural hazardous substances on the farm such as micro-organisms (bacteria etc) present in manures, slurry, dusts and soil. Always make sure children wash their hands thoroughly before eating or drinking. Do not allow young children to play where they are likely to touch slurry etc if they do not understand the need to keep their fingers out of their mouths.

A 7-year-old girl was taken to hospital after drinking diluted pesticide from an unlabelled soft-drink bottle. She recovered after treatment.

A young boy was taken to hospital after playing in an old store shed where sheep dip had spilt onto the shelves, floor and items stored in it. The shed had no door.

## **Fire**

Children often make dens in or on stacks of hay or straw, and sometimes take matches or candles with them. In some cases there have been multiple deaths as a result of a fire in a bale stack. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 11 of 16

Check for evidence of children playing in or burrowing under stacks. If you see signs of this, fence off the area, or contact the parents and ask them to keep their children away to prevent it from happening again.

Children may also be at risk if asked or allowed to build bonfires on the farm. They may not realise that flammable liquids should never be used to light or refresh a bonfire and may get too close or be caught unawares by the fire suddenly flaming. Do not allow children to help with bonfires, and always make sure they are completely extinguished before leaving them.

A 14-year-old boy was found dead in a straw barn. He had been playing with candles in the bales.

A 13-year-old girl was one of a group of trespassing teenagers who were playing in a large Dutch barn which was being used to store bales of straw. The farmer did not know they were there. It seems the girl lost something and used a lighted candle to look for it. The straw caught fire and she could not escape.

## **Visitors to the farm**

More and more farms are diversifying and opening to visitors. Farms that open regularly should consider permanent arrangements and an accreditation course such as the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS) (see [www.face-online.org.uk/cevas](http://www.face-online.org.uk/cevas)).

Organised tours such as school visits should have their own health and safety arrangements. Make the organisers aware of your farm health and safety rules and any no-go areas. Co-operation between visitors and the host farmer will ensure a successful visit. Guidance is available for teachers about managing farm visits (see 'Find out more').

Farms that open only occasionally (such as for Open Farm Sunday) should use the advice given in this leaflet as a minimum, and tell visitors that they must adhere to your safety instructions throughout the visit.

If you have properly assessed areas of your farm as safe for your children to play in, they may be safe for visitors. But remember that visitors and relatives are often more excited about seeing new things and can venture into places normally left unexplored by your own children – so check your assessment takes account of this.

**When ANY child is allowed to enter the farm workplace, they will need direct supervision.**

## **'Right to roam'**

If there is a right of way that passes through the farmyard, you need to clearly mark a safe access route or make people aware of the risks in some other way.

Right to roam and general public access matters are not covered in this leaflet, but are dealt with by the countryside agencies in England, Wales and Scotland. A contact website address is in 'Find out more'. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 12 of 16

## Trespass

The law relating to trespass is enforced by the police, not HSE. You may wish to speak to your community police officer for advice. If you know that children and young people are trespassing you should consider how to minimise any risks and how you can prevent access to your workplace:

Provide suitable, robust and well-maintained fences, gates and warning signs to ■■ deter access.

Watch out for children trespassing and tell them to leave. If they will not, stop ■■ work and call their parents or the police.

Report persistent offenders to their parents (if known) and the police. ■■

Two teenage boys made a regular meeting point in a barn: they died in a fire. One of the boys lived locally and had trespassed before. HSE's investigation showed that reasonable steps had been taken to try and keep them out and no action was taken against the farmer.

## Children between 13 and 16

The Prevention of Accidents to Children Regulations 1999 prevent any child under 13 years old from driving a tractor or other agricultural vehicle.

Young people over 13 years old are allowed to drive a tractor or other agricultural vehicle at work but before doing so should attend a training course run by a competent training provider. Whether at work or not, no young person should be permitted to drive a tractor or self-propelled machine unless:

they have the reach and strength to operate the controls with ease while sitting ■■ in the driving seat;

they have been instructed in safely operating the tractor etc they are driving and ■■ fully understand what all the controls do, and what might happen if they are improperly used;

they are closely supervised by a responsible adult; ■■

no other child or young person is on the tractor etc, and no other person is on ■■ any trailer or other equipment attached, other than to supervise or instruct and no members of the public, for example those present for a farm open day, are in the immediate vicinity;

the controls for the PTO, hydraulic devices and engine stopping are clearly ■■ marked to show what they are for, and the tractor is maintained so it is safe for them to operate;

there are no steep slopes, excavations, river banks, lake or pond edges, deep ■■ ditches or similar in the driving area.

Properly trained, instructed and supervised children between 13 and 16 can safely use some agricultural machines for straightforward tasks. Machines and operations that may be suitable include:

using a low-powered tractor with trailed roller or harrows on level grassland with ■■ no ditches;

operating a pedestrian-controlled motorised slurry or manure scraper; and ■■ working on the inspection grading platform of a potato harvester (not in the driving position). **Health and Safety Executive**

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However, there is a range of machines that they should not be allowed to:

drive; ■■

operate or help to operate; ■■

maintain or clean (unless the machine and its component parts are stationary, ■■ isolated and the keys removed);

including:

towed or self-propelled harvesters and processing machines (except machines ■■ designed for operation by people as well as the driver, where the child of 13 to 16 is on the operating platform and under the supervision of an adult);

trailers and towed machinery with built in conveying, loading or spreading ■■ mechanisms;

powered cultivators of any sort or power-driven machines with cutting, splitting, ■■ grinding or crushing mechanisms (including chainsaws);

chemical applicators of any sort, including hand-held equipment; ■■

ditching and drainage machinery; ■■

materials handlers including skid steer loaders, lift trucks and track-laying vehicles; ■■

powered grain or slurry-carrying machinery; ■■

powered feed-preparation equipment. ■■

A 14-year-old tractor driver lost control of the tractor when driving over potholes. It collided with another machine and overturned, breaking his leg and causing head injuries.

A 14-year-old boy was driving a tractor and had a 16-year-old friend with him. The friend got out and his leg was run over by a powered cultivator. His leg had to be amputated.

### ***All-terrain vehicles (ATVs)***

Where children and young people are operating ATVs for work, follow these rules:

Allow children over 13 to ride only ATVs of an appropriate size and power, after ■■ formal training on a low-power ATV.

**Check and adhere to the manufacturer's minimum age recommendations ■■ for your ATV – many have a minimum age of 16 years.**

Check that the ratio of a child's weight to that of the ATV is appropriate, as ■■ weight transfer is the key to safe handling.

Always refer to the owner's manual and warning labels on the machine. ■■

Never carry child passengers. It is illegal. ■■

Sit-astride ATVs are not designed to carry passengers of any age and this will ■■ reduce your ability to control the ATV.

Risk assessment will indicate the requirement to wear a suitable helmet when operating an ATV at work. The broader duties and responsibilities for the safe operation of ATVs are covered in HSE information sheet AIS33 (see 'Find out more'). **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 14 of 16

### ***Employing children and young people***

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require you to assess the risks to the health and safety of young people at work and take measures to protect them, taking account of:

the young workers' lack of experience; ■■

their limited awareness of risks; and ■■

their immaturity, both physical and mental. ■■

Make sure they have appropriate instruction, supervision and training, bearing in mind their capabilities.

Restrictions apply to what work young people can do. Where risks remain after control measures have been put in place, the young worker must not be exposed to any additional risk and should not be allocated this work.

Before employing a child of compulsory school age (normally under 16) to undertake any work activity, the employer must tell the parent of the child the findings of the risk assessment and how any risks identified will be controlled. This is as well as any licensing requirements imposed by the local education officer.

Licensing authorities determine the type of light work they will allow the child to do, and specify the length of working time permissible. Some local authorities exclude tractor operations from their licences.

A 15-year-old boy on a work experience scheme was helping a farmer clean out grain bins. The farmer was also supervising the loading of two lorries in the yard. While loading the first lorry, the farmer and lorry driver heard the boy shout. They rushed into the grain store and found him partially buried in a grain bin but could not rescue him.

An inexperienced 15-year-old boy was driving a tractor fitted with a loaded silage wagon at night, without lights. On a slope, the tractor hit a dip in the ground and overturned. The seat broke from its mountings, the boy was thrown about inside the cab and died from internal and spinal injuries. The tractor was not fitted with seat belts.

You need to consult your local authority child employment/education welfare officer before allowing children of compulsory school age to undertake light work on your farm. Local authority by-laws require licensing of child workers. This law is not enforced by HSE.

### **Young people between 16 and 18**

Just because a young person has left school, it does not necessarily mean they will have the ability and maturity to carry out work in the same way as a more experienced adult.

Remember that while you may have assessed a task as suitable for a young person to do, you will still need to ensure they have the right training and equipment and are adequately supervised, especially while they are learning new skills. Make sure they are supervised until they are competent. **Health and Safety Executive** Preventing accidents to children on farms Page 15 of 16

A 16-year-old farmer's son was working alone repairing the fragile roof of a cattle shed. He fell through a skylight to the concrete floor below and died from head injuries.

A 16-year-old trainee gamekeeper died alone when he went to feed pheasants. He was descending a slope driving an ATV with a load on the front rack. He was found with the quad bike overturned on top of him.

Younger children on the farm may look up to and want to copy young people at work. Make sure that these young people at work know they have the authority and responsibility to send other children (even their employer's child) back to the care of a responsible adult. They should not be expected to do their work and supervise younger children at the same time.

A 17-year-old employee was helping a farmer clear roof gutters. The 13-year-old farmer's son arrived. He wanted to go and see what the 17-year-old was doing and went across the fragile roof to where the older boy was working. His foot went through the roof and he fell to his death on the concrete floor below.

Remember that every example given in this leaflet is real and is one of many similar incidents. We hope that following this advice will help keep children and young people safe to be our farming future.

## **Find out more**

*Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions* [www.face-online.org.uk/codeofpractice](http://www.face-online.org.uk/codeofpractice)

*Carrying of passengers on farm trailers* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS36(rev1) HSE 2012 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.htm)

*Farmwise: Your essential guide to health and safety in agriculture* HSG270 (Second edition) HSE Books 2013 ISBN 978 0 7176 6579 2 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg270.htm)

*Guidance on storing pesticides for farmers and other professional users* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS16(rev1) HSE 2012 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais16.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais16.htm) **Health and Safety Executive**  
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*Preventing access to effluent storage and similar areas on farms* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS9(rev1) HSE 1997 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais9.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais9.pdf)

*Safe use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in agriculture and forestry* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS33(rev1) HSE 2013 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais33.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais33.htm)

Visit [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) for links to the Countryside Code and websites for the Countryside Council of Wales and the Outdoor Access Code for Scotland.

## **Further information**

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

This leaflet is available at: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg472.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg472.htm).

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