

Public Advisory Note 16 For Parents and Teachers on Educational Farm Visits

Arranging visits to farms as part of the educational curriculum is becoming more and more popular amongst schools in the UK.

Visiting an open farm can be a valuable experience for children of all ages, but teachers and parents should be aware of the dangers that exist for children within the farm environment.

The hazards that most of us are probably already aware of are those which can be seen and subsequently avoided, for example;

- farm machinery
- moving vehicles
- chemicals
- various dust
- animal bites

However, as well as these kinds of hazards there is evidence to show that visitors to farms are at risk from '*unseen*' hazards, in particular, infection. Some gastro-intestinal and other illnesses can be transmitted to humans through contact with infected livestock. Although the risk of infection is small, children, teachers, parents and other staff should be aware of the hazard before they organise a visit to an open farm.

This leaflet explains how the following simple precautions can reduce the risk of infection, and ensure the children and staff have a safe and enjoyable visit.

Prior to the visit, teachers should;

- discuss the arrangements with the farm
- ask about the areas of the farm that will be prohibited to children
- consider how many members of staff will be needed to supervise the children adequately - ask if the farm provides supervision
- try to restrict number of children per visit to a manageable size - this allows for closer supervision

- discuss the facilities available at the farm, for example do they have enough toilets and hand washing facilities to cater for your party and do they provide a separate area away from livestock where lunch can be eaten safely
- ask what activities children will be involved in, and how safe these are
- ask about protective clothing which may be needed, for example Wellington Boots - it may be necessary to bring a change of footwear and disposable bag to enable dirty footwear to be taken home safely
- ensure children know they must not eat snacks or put fingers in mouths whilst on the farm. Also that they must wash their hands after touching or feeding animals and before eating lunch Finally check that you know your local authority's general guidance on school visits

While on the farm;

- ensure that the farm manager or members of staff point out the danger on the farm, and that this advice includes how to avoid infection
- if young 'orphan' lambs are to be fed by children, be satisfied the lambs are not scouring (producing diarrhoea). Experts advise that only lambs over three weeks old should be hand fed by children, reducing the chance of gastrointestinal infection being passed on to the visitor
- pregnant women should not be in contact with new born lambs or the products of birth. If they do, they may run the risk of causing serious injury to their unborn child
- after any activity that involves touching, stroking or feeding animals children **MUST** be encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly. The farm should provide hot and cold running water, soap and paper towels for drying within the vicinity of the activities undertaken
- often children are allowed to watch milking of cows. If involved in this activity supervisors should ensure visitors are far enough away to avoid being splashed by urine or faecal matter. Some farms provide a viewing gallery with a perspex screen

On Leaving the Farm

Children have to change from Wellingtons back into other footwear for the journey home. Muddy wellingtons may contaminate hands with potentially infective organisms, and therefore children should again wash their hands after removing dirty footwear and before leaving the farm.

Finally, remember that the farms which are open to the public must, by law carry out assessments of the hazards on their farms and set up safeguards to minimise them.

Further Information and Advice

The National Association of Farms for Schools and the [National Farmers Union](#) have produced a directory of farms that cater for school parties. For a copy of the directory contact:-

The Secretary, Keith Bowman on
Telephone 0171-331-7304
Fax 0171-331-7382

**For further Advice/Information contact
Salford City Council
Environment Directorate, Turnpike House
631 Eccles New Road, Salford M5 2SH
Telephone: 0161 737 0551
Email: environment@salford.gov.uk**

OR

**The [Health and Safety Executive](#)
Grove House
Skerton Road
Manchester
Telephone 0161-952-8200**