

CHAPTER 7 – ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND OTHERS WHO ORGANISE VISITS FOR CHILDREN

This advice is for teachers and others who organise farm visits for children. It explains actions that you can take 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 *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E. coli* O157) or *Cryptosporidium parvum* (a microscopic parasite), present a serious health hazard and have the potential to cause serious illness and health problems which may be particularly severe in young children, the elderly, or those with reduced immune systems.

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 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 this Industry Code of Practice so that you understand what control measures the farm should have in place. You can then discuss arrangements for your visit with the management at the site.
- Confirm that the control measures provided at the site match the recommendations in the Industry Code of Practice.
- Seek advice from your local authority or organisation on what the appropriate ratio of pupils to teachers/leaders/assistants/parents should be.
- Discuss and agree with the supervisors, parents or staff of the school, crèche 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 in the following four situations: after contacting animals, before eating, before and after using play equipment, and when leaving site.
- Before your visit cover at least the following key points with the children:
 - o Explain the rules for the visit, including stressing that they must not eat, drink or chew anything (including sweets) outside the areas in which you permit them to do so.
 - o Explain why they must wash their hands thoroughly after contact with the animals, before eating or drinking anything etc.
 - o Demonstrate how to wash their hands properly.
 - o Discuss 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 the visit make sure that the children:

- Are reminded of the rules while on site.
- Do not kiss animals.
- Always wash their hands thoroughly before eating, after any contact with animals, before and after using any play equipment at the site, and again before leaving the site.

- Eat only food that they have brought with them or food for human consumption that they have bought on the premises, in designated areas.
- Never eat food that has fallen to the ground.
- Never taste animal foods.
- Do not suck fingers or put hands, pens, pencils or crayons etc. in mouths.
- Where possible, clean or clean and change their footwear before leaving. The site should have facilities to clean footwear as you leave the site.
- Wash their hands after cleaning / 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.⁴³
- 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.
- Know what to do if they get separated from the group for any reason. 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 for hand washing before eating or leaving the site so that the children do not have to rush. What to do if you or any of your party become ill after a visit
- 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.
- Please also contact the attraction you visited and inform them of the illness