



Avoiding ill health at open farms - Advice to farmers (with teachers' supplement)

Agriculture Information Sheet No 23 (revised)

Introduction

This information sheet provides advice for farmers and others responsible for open farms, or farms which run open days, on practical steps to reduce the risk of ill health to visitors.

Ill health following visits to open farms is unusual. Such visits play a valuable part in the education and development of children, and are an enjoyable experience for many people.

Teachers and others who organise visits to farms should also 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.

Background

All animals naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which can be transmitted to humans, where they may cause ill health. Some organisms which may be contracted on farms, such as the verocytotoxin-producing bacterium *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E coli* O157), present a serious hazard and potentially cause severe disease. ***E coli* O157 in particular can cause severe illness in young children.** Good general cleanliness around the farm, separating eating and contact areas, adequate hand-washing facilities, information for staff and visitors, and proper supervision of animal contact and hand washing are all essential.

At least 45% of all cattle herds may carry the bacterium, and there have been cases of human ill health following contact with animals carrying it. Very low numbers of *E coli* O157 can cause infection and so it is important that farmers control the risks to visitors. Controlling the risks from *E coli* O157 will control the risks from most other organisms carried by animals which are transmissible to humans by hand to mouth.

The law

If you open your farm to the public, including for charity events, you have duties under health and safety law. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 (as amended) 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; and
- take appropriate action to prevent or adequately control that exposure.

The remainder of this sheet gives advice on complying with these Regulations.

Assessing the risk

Your COSHH assessment is the essential first step in deciding what controls you need. Remember that:

- current veterinary and medical opinion is that farmers should assume that all ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats and deer) carry *E coli* O157;
- *E coli* O157 is found in a range of other animals including geese and seagulls;
- there are no tests in the live animal to prove that it is free of *E coli* O157 infection. A negative test does not mean the animal is free of infection. Animals which have previously tested negative may therefore begin to excrete the organism at a later date;
- *E coli* O157 may be introduced to your farm at any time by new stock, wild birds and animals, or by visitors such as delivery drivers who have visited other farms;
- young stock, or stock under stress because of pregnancy, unfamiliarity with people etc are more likely to excrete *E coli* O157;
- *E coli* O157 can persist for long periods outside the animal - up to 150 days in soil and 90 days in cattle faeces. Other animals on the farm, including pets, can therefore easily acquire the bacterium;
- visitors are most likely to be infected with *E coli* O157 from contact with animals or their faeces.

Controlling the risk

Given the advice above, assume that your animals carry *E coli* O157, and put controls in place to minimise the risk of visitors being contaminated by it, eg when:

- contacting animals in petting areas or during bottle feeding;
- touching gates or animal pen divisions contaminated with faeces;
- walking through areas contaminated with faeces and later removing footwear.

**RISK ASSESSMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH EDUCATION/TOURISM
AT
BIG SHEEP & LITTLE COW FARM
Risk Assessment reviewed by Carol Clark on 1ST FEBRUARY, 2011**

Risk No. 1 - Ice Cream Tasting

Possible contamination of Ice Cream which would be eaten by tourist visitors if:

- (i) Containers and spoons not kept clean/covered.
- (ii) Dirty spoons mixed with clean spoons.
- (iii) Not keeping the ice cream at the correct temperature.
- (iv) Poor procedures which might cause one guide to use product which another had rejected.
- (v) Tourist visitors contaminating the ice cream as it is passed around.

Risk Assessment - LOW

Control Measures:

- 1. Guide to check spoons and containers prior to tasting session.
- 2. Check that the ice cream is the correct texture.
- 3. Allocate the correct number of spoons to each visitor and advise them that they can only be used once.
- 4. All dirty spoons to be put into a disinfectant immediately after use.
- 5. Ice cream which is left over will either be disposed of immediately or put into the freezer.
- 6. The ice cream scoop must be stored in clean water, which must be changed not less than every hour.
- 7. Staff must ensure that they have washed their hands thoroughly before serving ice cream.
- 8. Clothing and hair must not place the product at risk.
- 9. Ice Cream storage procedures are maintained.

Risk No. 2. - Handling small animals

Possible risk of:

- (i) Bacterial contamination on hands or clothing of anyone handling the small animals.
- (ii) This would be made worse if the animals were not in a good state of health.
- (iii) Being bitten by an animal, especially if it felt insecure, was handled without care or is ill.

Risk Assessment - LOW (based on the history of the past nineteen years)

Control Measures:

- 1. Make sure that all schools and groups are sent a Health and Safety Advice Sheet prior to the visit.
- 2. Children are to be asked not to put their fingers in their mouths after handling animals until they have washed their hands.
- 3. Children will be shown how to handle animals correctly.
- 4. Children will be asked to comply with our code of practice -
 - listening carefully to the guide at all times
 - no unnecessary noise.
 - No running around
- 4. If they have any cuts or grazes we will cover them.
- 5. Provision of wipes and anti-bacterial lotion in small animal barn, should small animals defecate on hands of visitors
- 6. If they are cut or grazed during the tour we will immediately wash and cover the area.

Risk No. 3. - Feeding lambs

Possible risks:

- (i) The very young child thinking that the bottle is for them and drinking from it.
- (ii) Lifting of lambs using incorrect handling techniques (visitors and staff) and straining or spraining parts of the body.
- (iii) Being accidentally bitten by a lamb.
- (iv) Bacterial contamination on hands or clothing.
- (v) Tripping over objects which may have been left by others.
- (vi) Transmission of Orf to children.

Risk Assessment – Medium- in connection with under sixes and those who have a less developed immune system

Control Measures:

1. Check the condition of animals being used on a daily basis and anything showing signs of sickness must be removed to isolation away from the visitor
2. Warn and demonstrate to parents of young children how to manage use of the bottle.
3. The back must not be used as a lever when lifting anything.
4. Guide must be on the look out for objects which might cause a tripping hazard for visitors
5. Management of groups containing children under the age of six – Bottle to be given to the adult minder who will engage with the lamb and then hand the bottle to the child, but will continue to manage the situation. Inform that anti-bacterial foam is available in the short term. Point out work stations and carry hand held spray.
6. Guide must insist that everyone washes their hands thoroughly at the end of the tour.
7. Warn parents of children under the age of six to manage the “fingers in mouth habits” of under fives. Inform that Mousse and Wipes do not replace handwashing
8. Installation of stock boarding in front of pens used for lamb feeding to prevent contamination of clothing of young children
9. Public to remain outside of animal enclosures – standing on clean concrete, which has been disinfected prior to the start of each day’s tours

Risk No. 4 - Bathing & Feeding the Pig

Possible risks:

- (i) The pig could inadvertently stand on the toe of a visitor.
- (ii) The pig could bite a visitor by accident or design.
- (iii) Possible bacterial contamination from pig to hands or clothes of small children

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measures:

1. Select the pig according to temperament
2. The pigs to be used on the tour will be housed separately to avoid contamination by rear end of another animal.
3. People who bath the pig, treat him or her with respect.
4. Children are not to be rough with the pig
5. Immediately prior to using pig, clean contact areas with Byotrol wipe
6. Bath pig in 3% solution of Byotrol. Thoroughly clean sponges between each use.
7. If pig defecates in wash yard, clean up faeces immediately and disinfect the area with Biotrol/Vircon S.
8. Pig Bathing is restricted to children over the age of six because it is acknowledged that their immune system is better able to cope if exposed to bacterial contamination. Children under six are able to brush the pig.

Risk No 5 - Handling Poultry

Possible Risks:

- (i) Someone being pecked or scratched.
- (ii) Bacterial contamination.
- (iii) Allergic reaction to feathers
- (iv) Avian Flu' ?

Risk Assessment - Low

Control Measures:

- 1. Tour guide to maintain strict control.
- 2. No free range chickens on farm to avoid ground contamination and risk the soiling of feet.
- 3. EHO has informed me that we cannot be held responsible for feet contaminated by wild ducks, crows, rabbits etc, therefore visitor hygiene must be underlined thoroughly
- 4. Show participants how to hold poultry - firmly holding the wings.
- 5. As far as holding the chicks is concerned, be sure to ask the children not to squeeze them as the chick is at risk here, particularly with toddlers !!
- 6. In the event of Avian Flu' arriving in Britain, all poultry will be housed and not come into contact with visitors

Risk No 6. – Inspecting/feeding larger animals at close quarters - Sheep, cows, goats, ponies, donkey.

Possible Risks:

- (i) When visitors are looking at the larger animals in the field be sure to warn them to keep their feet well away from the animals to avoid having toes trodden on.
- (ii) Take care not to have people, in particular children stand immediately in front of animals, because animals being animals may just decide to walk forward and knock them over.
- (iii) Allowing children to run around and be noisy, can cause anxiety amongst the animals and so risk accidents.
- (iv) Warn visitors about cow pats and the like. Some people are quite distressed if they dirty their shoes. If you notice that this is the case, give them paper towels upon returning to the building and ask them to make sure that they wash their hands well afterwards.
- (v) Small children may fall into dirt. If parents have a change of clothing with them, assist them in cleaning the child or ask another member of staff for help.
- (vi) Gates and barriers may become contaminated by faeces
- (vii) Accidental biting of fingers when feeding by hand.

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measures

- 1. When in the field with visitors it is essential that they obey your rules to avoid accidents - bumps and bruises. In the event of an accident please use the first aid box and write up the accident in the accident book. However we must avoid accidents at all costs.
- 2. Guide to demonstrate how to feed animals keeping the hand flat in the case of feeding small nuts.
- 3. Daily Procedure Prior to start of tours. Clean down walls, barriers and yard with hose pipe. Brush away surplus water. Then apply detergent/disinfectant with brush, to barriers (stock boarding in front of pens) and gates where public may make contact.
- 4. We must always be mindful of the health risks of E Coli 157 etc., therefore after a tour we must insist in a nice way that everyone who has touched animals must wash their hands thoroughly
 - anti-bacterial soap
 - paper towels
 - electric hand drier
- 5. Guide to apply soap to the hands of all participants. Demonstrate how to rub in soap. Supervise rinsing and ensure that hands are dried.
- 6. All tour participants will walk through foot disinfection and a small pressurized spray will be used on boots or wheels which had come into contact with mud

Risk No. 7 - The Sand/Play Area

Possible Risks:

- (i) Dirty footwear to contaminate the sand.
- (ii) Sand in eyes - if it is thrown therefore it is strictly forbidden to throw sand.
- (iii) Children must be supervised by their parents at all times while playing on toys, because of the risk of others bumping into them, nipping fingers etc.
- (iv) Toys not being safe.

Risk Assessment - Low

Control Measures:

1. Tell children that they must not throw sand
2. Tell people to clean their feet if you notice that they are dirty- show them where the foot brush is.
3. Inspect the toys on a daily basis and if anything looks damaged - remove it.
4. Check the sand daily - remove debris. Disinfect weekly
5. Do not allow people to eat food or drink in the sand area.
6. Periodically use peracetic acid on nearby picnic tables (Only to be done by David)
7. Use Byotrol Micro-cleanse for weekly disinfection of surface of sand and wooden barrier.

Risk No. 8 - Picnic area

Possible Risks:

- (i) Possible contamination of benches, tables and ground where people may decide to eat, because of soiling wild birds.
- (ii) Visitors contaminating picnic benches with brought in food. Followed by use of other visitors.

Risk Assessment - Low

Control Measures:

1. Addition of signs in prominent places to raise awareness of the need for good hygiene practices.
2. Regularly check bench and table tops and clean/disinfect accordingly.
3. Visitors asked to clean up after themselves and take their rubbish home.
4. No livestock allowed in areas where people eat food outdoors.

Risk No. 9 - Toilets/Wash Basins

Possible Risks:

- (i) Insufficient soap/paper towels/toilet paper for visitors to utilise the facilities properly.
- (ii) Water on the floor could cause a slipping hazard.
- (iii) Poor visitor hygiene risking contamination of those who follow on

Risk Assessment - Low

Control Measures:

1. Provision of baby changing facilities for the young family
2. Provision of Disabled Toilet facilities
3. Provision of stools for toddlers to stand on to wash hands or use toilets.
4. Ensure that the periodic checks on these facilities are carried out and that the record is maintained.
5. Disinfected rubber mats positioned in front of wash troughs to disinfect soles of footwear.
6. Frequent sanitizing of commonly used surfaces throughout the day
7. When the floors are washed please ensure that the wet floor warning notice is displayed.
8. Additional notices warning that a person changes their shoes then they must wash their hands before eating and drinking.

Risk No. 10 - Pregnant Ladies near Sheep which are giving birth

Possible risk:

- (i) It is possible that sheep can suffer from Enzootic Abortion, which causes them to abort their lambs, which usually die. Toxoplasmosis, spread by cat urine also causes abortion in sheep which can affect pregnant women beings. When pregnant ladies come into contact with such infections it can place them at risk of aborting their babies. This risk is only at lambing time. Our flock do not have this problem, because we are a closed flock. However, one can never be certain just how and when such infection can occur therefore it is safer to warn pregnant ladies not to mix with the sheep at lambing time, or touch lambs.

Risk Assessment - Treat as High, even though it has never been an issue

Control Measures

1. Explain the risk to pregnant ladies and ask them not to touch sheep and lambs.

Risk No. 11. - Lifting Lambs out of the pens

Possible Risk:

- (i) When lifting lambs out of the pens either to inspect or to feed, if we do not handle them properly i.e. use one's back as a lever while lifting it is possible to strain one's back - this is particularly the case when the lambs are a couple of months old.

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) When lifting anything, it is essential to assess the weight before lifting and prepare to do it correctly. Do not use the back as a lever.
- (ii) This means bending the legs and using the leg muscles to lift.
- (iii) If the weight is too heavy, then it is essential that you ask someone to help you.

Risk No. 12 – Pony Rides

Possible Risk:

- (i) Child's toes being trodden on by pony.
- (ii) Child being kicked or bitten by pony
- (iii) Losing balance and falling off the pony.
- (iv) RSI and back injuries to person leading pony.
- (v) The unexpected startling the pony – Noise, sudden movement, aircraft, wind, rain, thunder, child being badly behaved

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) When pony rides are in operation children wait outside the field.
- (ii) Children have to wear a riding hat that complies with current relevant British Standard.
- (iii) Children must wear heeled shoes.
- (iv) All handlers to be trained in the in-house procedures: training recorded; over twenty year olds accepted by our insurance company as competent to do the job.
- (v) The pony ride operator must take regular breaks and be trained in appropriate lifting techniques.
- (vi) The pony ride operator must be confident in handling the pony/animals.
- (vii) All equipment must be regularly inspected and repaired as necessary.
- (viii) Children given appropriate instruction. ie. Hold on to saddle, feet in stirrups, no shouting.
- (ix) Select the ponies for quiet, calm, temperament and reliability.
- (x) Children will remain on lead rein at all times.
- (xi) Parent/Guardians sign to acknowledge the risks involved in the activity.

- (xii) Do not use pony when weather is inclement.
- (xiii) Check the health and well-being of the pony on a daily basis. Do not over use the pony to the point of fatigue. Give regular rests, water and shelter from sun in mid-summer.

Risk No. 13 – Use of (Two seater) Polaris Ranger RZT (Must be over six years and a size which safely fits within the cab)

Possible risks:

- (i) Children may not have the motor skills/co-ordination to drive safely
- (ii) Children may engage in dangerous actions – Deliberately crash
- (iii) Children may lose control and collide with obstacles

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) All parents to read information sheet and sign to confirm age of child and to accept the risks
- (ii) PPE to be worn at all times. (Helmet, balaclava & gloves)
- (iii) Safety netting must be in place before moving the vehicle
- (iv) Safety belts must be worn.
- (v) Careful instruction of all children before ride starts
- (vi) Course to be designed in open field using cones and devoid of solid objects
- (vii) No more than one passenger – to include the staff member supervising the activity.
- (viii) Vehicle to be checked over before use.
- (ix) Speed limited to 10 mph
- (x) All inclines approached at a 90 degree angle
- (xi) Managing Staff will disengage power, using ignition key and handbrake in the event of a dangerous manoeuvre
- (xii) Use of straw bales or other such buffers to minimise the result of loss of control.
- (xiii) All accidents and incidents must be recorded in the accident book and analysed at staff meetings.

Risk No. 14 – Woolly Jumpers Play Barn

Possible risks:

- (i) Falls, Trips slips resulting in cuts and bruises.
- (ii) Collision with others or objects.
- (iii) Antisocial behaviour. ie Bullying, fighting and intimidation.
- (iv) Horseplay with friends resulting in accidents.
- (v) Risk to other users or themselves from children wearing casts, calipers and or other metal braces if in collision on slides or elsewhere. Also risk of damage to equipment which then becomes another hazard to all.
- (vi) Cross contamination, caused by removal of shoes.
- (vii) Soiling of play equipment.

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) All parents sign to confirm acceptance of the rules of the establishment.
- (ii) All shoes and sharp objects to be removed from the person, before using the equipment.
- (iii) A person wearing a cast or calipers will not be permitted to use the slides and climbing equipment in view safety to self and others.
- (iv) Toddlers require greater parental supervision, when the play barn is in multi-use.
- (v) The barn works on the basis of shared space, which requires respect and tolerance of all users. Authoritative staff monitoring and explanation needed to maintain the culture.
- (vi) Provide sanitizing gel for use prior to entry into play area/prior to eating to reduce bacterial contamination on hands.

- (vii) Additional notices to remind people to wash hands after changing footwear, before eating and drinking.
- (viii) Member(s) of staff present at all times to manage and monitor behaviour.
- (ix) Parent/Guardians acknowledge their own responsibility for safety of minors.
- (x) CCTV to monitor blind spots and relay images back to reception and the seating area.
- (xi) Adhere to strict rules when using the slides – No one starts until the bottom is clear.
- (xii) No horseplay.
- (xiii) No climbing on safety netting.
- (xiv) No throwing of balls.
- (xv) No sweets or food to be consumed on the play equipment.
- (xvi) No anti-social behaviour.
- (xvii) Detailed daily inspection and cleaning of equipment.
- (xviii) In event of play equipment being soiled, the area is to be closed off, cleaned and sanitized.
- (xix) ROSPA Inspection & Certification.

Risk No. 15 – Barrel Train

Possible risks:

- (i) Possible knocks to the passenger, on bodywork of barrel when train in motion and going over bumpy ground
- (ii) Collision with grazing animals if present in fields
- (iii) Young children bumping head or face on steering wheel if not adjusted properly.
- (iv) Person falling if trying to leave while train still in motion.
- (v) Possible contamination of barrels with mud and faeces from feet of users, during wet weather conditions

Risk Assessment – Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) Staff to give assistance to passengers entering and leaving barrels.
- (ii) All passengers must wear a seat lap belt and staff will check that it is correctly adjusted to suit the size of the passenger.
- (iii) Steering wheel adjustment checked to suit the passenger.
- (iv) Passengers told to stay in seat until the barrel is stationary.
- (v) Toddlers to be accompanied by an adult (one charge per barrel). Barrel train driver to assess the safety of the combination of the two persons in connection with identified risks. Take into account size of bodies and proximity to hard surfaces. Driver to check with passengers to ascertain their safety and comfort.
- (vi) Check all barrels for contamination prior to each use and clean, dry and sanitise as appropriate.
- (vii) Do not use in very wet conditions in view of possible splashes causing contamination of clothing.

Risk No: 16 – Pedal Go-Carts and Tractors

Possible Risks:

- (i) Collision with pedestrians at change-over.
- (ii) Because this is a family activity all users must be mindful of their speed and more inexperienced users.
- (iii) Collision caused by inability to apply brakes.
- (iv) Collision caused by under developed motor skills.
- (v) Bacterial Contamination of grass surface by wild rabbits /birds and other stray farm animals including dogs.

Risk Assessment – Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) Rules to be displayed at entrance to the course.
- (ii) Users must not walk on the Track, when others are driving.
- (iii) Adjust seats on go-carts according to size of rider.
- (iv) Riders must not use equipment which is the wrong size for them – too small – too big.
- (v) All users must follow in one direction according to arrows.
- (vi) When first using go-carts all users must experiment with brake before building up speed.
- (vii) Restrict over zealous use and speed risking collision.
- (viii) Barriers to prevent collision with boundaries and objects.
- (ix) Each item to be checked daily for damage which could put the user at risk.
- (x) Daily walk over course to check for contamination of grass and toys. Then clean and sanitise as appropriate. (3% solution of Byotrol Micro-cleanse following cleaning).

Risk No 17 – Building House from Straw and Wood**Possible Risks:**

- (i) Strain caused by lifting straw bales.
- (ii) Straw Bales or other materials falling on children.
- (iii) Allergic reaction to straw.
- (iv) Splinters from wood.

Risk Assessment – Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) Adult supervised activity at all time.
- (ii) Restrict height limit to approximately one meter.
- (iii) Use only light materials.
- (iv) Select clean bales of straw.
- (v) Check before starting activity that no one is allergic to straw and dust.
- (vi) Check wood for splinters and warn children about the danger of using wood.

Risk No 18 – Making a Concrete Slab**Possible Risks:**

- (i) Cement is a light powder and wind could easily blow powder into eyes of children.
- (ii) Cement can burn skin and cause irritation.
- (v) Concrete can spoil clothing.

Risk Assessment – Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) Adult supervised activity at all times.
- (ii) Only adult to handle cement and introduce to sand.
- (iii) Plenty of water available for washing hands.
- (iv) Check hands and clothing immediately the task is complete.
- (v) Eye protection, gloves and overalls to be worn by everyone involved.

Risk No 19 – Playing with Sheep Dog**Possible Risks:**

- (i) Contamination of frisby or other items when children throw it into the field for the dog to collect. This could be especially dangerous if this occurs when people are having a picnic.
- (ii) Accidental nips from over zealous play.

Risk Assessment – Medium

Control Measures:

- (i) No livestock within the vicinity of picnics.
- (ii) Increase the number of hand-wash notices to warn visitors of the risk of bacterial infection
- (iii) Only allow visitor contact with the farm dog under managed conditions.

Risk No 20 – Contamination of Clean Areas from footwear and or clothing used by staff when cleaning on farm**Possible Risks:**

- (i) When staff are working in animal pens or in fields, feet or clothes may become soiled with animal faeces and risk transfer into clean areas.

Risk Assessment - Medium

Control Measure

- (i) Footwear used in these settings must be removed in the back-up room/ sprayed with Biotrol/Vircon S and then put on other shoes used in “clean” areas etc.
- (ii) Guides to use ankle boots for tour and change footwear if transferring to work in playbarn or other areas
- (iii) Guides to wear dust coat or other appropriate covering while doing farm work and remove before entering other areas.
- (iv) The back up room is only to be used by staff and labeled as such
- (v) Wash your hands after changing footwear or clothing.