

ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND OTHERS WHO ORGANISE VISITS FOR CHILDREN

This advice is for 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 *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.

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.

Additional advice

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

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

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

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/> www.hpa.org.uk/ www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/
www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm <http://www.defra.gov.uk/> <http://vla.defra.gov.uk/>



**Preventing or controlling ill health
from animal contact at visitor
attractions**

***Advice to Teachers and Others who
organise visits for children***

Before your visit, you should:

- Read and understand the advice in the industry Code of Practice, and attend a pre-visit to discuss arrangements for the visit with 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, 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 with soap and water after contacting animals and before eating. Key points to cover with the children should include:
 - 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.
 - Explaining why they must wash their hands thoroughly after contact with the animals, and before eating or drinking anything.
 - Demonstrating how to wash their hands properly.
 - Discussing the requirements for appropriate clothing, including suitable footwear. You should liaise with the attraction to ascertain what this is.
 - Checking that cuts, grazes etc on children's hands are covered with a waterproof dressing.

During and after the visit, make sure that children:

- 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 the animals, 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 practical and possible, clean or change their footwear before leaving.
- Wash their hands after changing their footwear.
- Check that 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

Remember the children are your responsibility during the visit:

- You should supervise them during the visit, especially during handwashing to make sure that each child washes thoroughly.
- Allow plenty of time for handwashing before eating or leaving the site so that the children do not have to rush.

Please Note: 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.