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The Outdoor Education & External Visits website is at  
<https://slp.somerset.org.uk/sites/sccoea/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

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## INTRODUCTION

The benefits for children of all ages when visiting a working farm can include meeting people from different walks of life, seeing animals in a working environment, experiencing the freedom of green open spaces, and being close to nature. A well-planned visit can enhance all areas of the curriculum and engage pupils' senses, bring science to life, develop vocabulary and provide a stimulating experience for creative writing. Farm visits can provide hands-on experience for Early Years right through to a practical demonstration of some career options for post 16s, with something for all ages and abilities. Getting children out into the countryside also has wider community benefits.

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## HYGIENE, DISEASES AND INFECTIONS

Farm visits provide many positive educational objectives but is also a location where contaminants and micro-organisms can provide a real health risk to all humans. Health risks include the bacteria the E.coli 0157, or the parasite Cryptosporidium. In addition, Weil's Disease (from contaminated water) and Lyme Disease (from infected ticks) are all commonly linked to a farm environment. The risk of infection can be readily controlled through good hygiene control. Further detail on the described diseases and suitable control measures can be found below.

- Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease): <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/leptospirosis>
- Lyme's Disease: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lyme-disease/>
- Cryptosporidiosis: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/zoonoses-data-sheets/cryptosporidiosis.pdf>
- E-Coli: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/zoonoses-data-sheets/verotoxigenic-ecoli.pdf>

The above zoonosis infections are transmitted by contact, directly or indirectly, with the faeces or urine of animals or by the drinking of contaminated water. Such infections are relatively rare but can be serious. Most are treatable with antibiotics.

**Prevention of infection** involves:

- Avoiding contact with urine, faeces or contaminated water;
- Avoiding drinking potentially contaminated water;
- Covering skin abrasions with waterproof dressings;

- Thorough washing of any possibly affected areas of skin.

Symptoms may include flu-like attacks, headache (often persistent), vomiting, muscle pain, diarrhoea and abdominal pain.

Staff and young people operating in the vicinity of farms, on farm visits or on water activities should take the above precautions and inform parents accordingly.

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## **SOME DO'S AND DON'TS**

Supervision of the group is important because of the risks that are present on the farm. The following list of do's and don'ts acts as a useful range of measures to help ensure your farm visit is trouble free.

### **DO:**

- Arrange a pre-visit to satisfy yourself that the farm is safe to visit and will provide the desired educational outcomes;
- Ensure that you have completed a Farm Visit risk assessment, or equivalent, that outlines your arrangements for the visit, supervision, behaviour, hygiene, food management etc;
- Cover cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing;
- If necessary, use a change of footwear (e.g. wellington boots) during the visit, and/or clean footwear when leaving the farm;
- Ensure there is adequate supervision, especially where participants encounter animals, farm machinery or working areas such as the dairy, haybarn, silos and slurry pits;
- Give consideration about the risk of infection from animals (in particular sheep, but also cattle and goats) to anyone who is pregnant, or has recently given birth;
- Ensure everyone washes their hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water, and then dries their hands on paper towels, after touching animals, before eating or drinking, and on leaving the farm (most gels and wipes which might be used as a substitute, for example after a walk through a farm without access to washing facilities, are not as effective as thorough washing).

### **DON'T:**

- Put fingers in mouths while petting animals or walking around the farm;
- Kiss animals or place faces against them;
- Eat or drink while going around the farm;
- Sample animal food;
- Drink from farm taps (other than designated drinking water taps);
- Touch animal droppings;
- Ride on vehicles – other than those designed or modified, and insured, to carry passengers.
- Play or climb on tractors, farm machinery or stacked bales unless identified for the purpose;
- Play in the farm area or in other areas that are out of bounds, such as grain storage tanks, slurry pits
- Use machinery, or engage in manual work, unless the risks have been properly assessed and managed. Children under 13 are not allowed to drive or ride on tractors and other agriculturally based machinery.

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## **FURTHER GUIDANCE/USEFUL LINKS**

Please see [Appendix A: Farm Visits – Planning Checklist](#). (Please note that this Checklist is available as a separate document from the [Templates & Forms](#) page in the [Start Here](#) section of the Outdoor Education & External Visits website). The [EEC website](#) contains many useful risk assessment templates and a external

visits management application where details of your farm visit can be recorded and endorsed by your school External Visit Coordinator (EVC).

**More detailed advice is available from:**

- Outdoor Education National Guidance – Farm Visits: <http://oeapng.info/download/1214/>
- Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge: <https://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>
- Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS): <https://www.visitmyfarm.org/cevas-farmer-training>
- Health and Safety Executive – Agriculture/Children and Public Safety: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/children.htm>
- Health and Safety Executive – Preventing accidents to children on farms: [Preventing accidents to children on farms INDG472\(rev4\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

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## Appendix A

### Farm Visits: Planning Checklist

Proposals for Farm Visit:	
Visit Leader:	Date of Visit:

	Yes	No	N/A
Have you conducted a pre-visit visit to the farm?			
Have you identified and agreed upon the educational objectives with the farm for the visit?			
Does the farm hold a Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge, or another accreditation body e.g. CEVAS			
Does the farm appear well managed?			
Have you completed your farm visit risk assessment?			
Is the general environment clean and presentable, given the type of activity?			
Is there machinery on the farm that is accessible and could pose a risk to the young people?			
Does the farm have traffic-free areas or has the group been advised of possible vehicle movements when on site?			

Are there plans to transport the group around the farm using a passenger trailer (see HSE guide - <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.pdf">http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.pdf</a> )			
Are sites with known risks secure and fenced off (consider silos, slurry pits, chemicals, animal enclosures, haybarns)?			
Do animals appear to be well looked after?			
Are there suitable washing and toilet facilities?			
Do you have a plan-B in place if the weather is inclement or an issue arises that disrupts your planned farm visit?			
Are there any special rules that the farm would like the young people to observe?			
Does the group know what to bring and wear on the farm visit?			
Are there any additional costs other than the entrance fee?			
Can refreshments be bought on site?			
Are refreshment/eating areas away from where any contact with animals can take place?			

Notes:

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