



OPEN FARMS AND PET FARMS IN IRELAND: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PREVENTING AND CONTROLLING INFECTION

**INFORMATION SHEET
FOR THE PUBLIC,
EDUCATION AND
CHILDCARE SERVICES
AND COMMUNITY
ORGANISATIONS**



A visit to an open farm should be a very enjoyable and worth while experience for both children and adults alike. However, the open farm environment will be unfamiliar for some people and there are potential risks associated with the farm environment which visitors may not normally be exposed to. It is important that those organising visits to open farms, including schools and community groups, would consider these risks and take a few basic steps to ensure a safe visit to the open farm.

Animals which you will encounter, and may have contact with on the open farms, naturally carry micro-organisms some of which can be transmitted to humans and can cause ill-health. It must be borne in mind that pathogens such as E.coli 0157 and Cryptosporidium parvum can cause serious illness, particularly in young children.

This factsheet outlines some simple practical guidelines for groups of visitors to open farms so that school and group visitors can have a safe and healthy visit to an open farm.

Preparing for your visit:

- Contact the open farm in advance of your visit to discuss the visit.
- As with all group outings, ensure that you have an adequate level of supervision within your group.
- Brief all supervisors before the visit.
- Ensure that all supervisory staff are aware of preventative measures against the transmission of infection to be observed by children during the visit, as listed below.

A briefing should also be held with children before the visit to the farm commences.



The following points must be covered with children before they commence their visit to the farm:

- As HAND WASHING is the single most important protection against the spread of disease, they must wash their hands after contact with animals and before eating/handling food and before leaving the farm.

The use of hand sanitizer / wipes alone is not an acceptable substitute for proper hand washing on a farm. (A useful resource can be found at <http://www.e-bug.eu/>. e-Bug is a free educational resource for classroom and home use for learning about micro-organisms, the spread, prevention and treatment of infection).

- Warm water and liquid soap is essential for adequate hand washing. A demonstration on effective hand washing should be carried out by a supervisor.
- Children should be told that they are only permitted to eat in the designated eating areas and after hand washing has taken place. Children must be told that eating is forbidden during parts of the visit to the farm which include feeding, contact and petting of animals.
- Children should be supervised to so as to ensure they do not put anything from the farm into or near their mouths and that they do not suck their fingers or put anything they find into or near their mouths.
- Children and parents should be instructed on the type of footwear and clothing necessary. The recommended footwear is wellington boots which should be washed and disinfected when leaving the farm.

During the visit, to prevent against the risk of infection ensure that all children within the group:

Always wash their hands thoroughly after contact with animals, before eating food or drinking and before leaving the farm.

Observe all safety signs and rules and follow the designated routes for the open farms.

Ensure that food is only eaten in the designated eating area.

Do not enter restricted animal housing areas or pens.

Do not touch manure slurry or other farm yard waste.

Only feed animals when it is allowed and they are invited to do so.

Do not kiss the animals or allow them to lick their face.

Where facilities are provided, footwear, buggies and wheel chairs should be cleaned before leaving the farm.



GENERAL SAFETY GUIDANCE TO BE FOLLOWED DURING THE VISIT TO THE OPEN FARM:

Children are the responsibility of the adult(s) they accompany during their visit and they must be supervised at all times during the visit, obey the instructions of the open farm staff and never wander off unaccompanied.

Children and other visitors must never enter areas that have restricted access i.e. animal housing sheds, hay-barns, slurry tanks, machinery storage, work areas and open fields.

Should working machinery be on the open farm route, keep a clear distance between you and the machine so that you are visible to the driver.

Ensure that children and/or adults in your group do not walk behind animals, startle or chase animals. Children should be instructed to approach animals in a quiet and gentle manner.

Children and other visitors must only drink from designated drinking water points.

Visitors should keep clear of electrical fences and not climb over gates and fences.

**If illness is experienced after visit, contact your GP and say you were at an open farm and also contact the open farm
If you are requesting a visit by a mobile farm to your house, premises, event e.g. for a party or community event:**

1. If your premises is subject to inspection by a regulatory authority e.g. a nursing home, crèche, school, ensure that a visit of a mobile farm to your premises is an acceptable practice to the regulatory body inspecting your premises and that suitable infection control measures are in place
2. Discuss arrangements for animal contact and hand washing with the operator beforehand.



This Appendix is available to download free at www.ehai.ie

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