



Farm Visits and Tick Awareness



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Advice for schools and families

Now is the time of year when farms open their gates to share with the public the joy of spring and the arrival of new life. Over the Easter Holidays families may take the opportunity to spend time visiting farms and other animal attractions. While the experience is fun and educational there is also a risk that infections commonly carried by animals are passed on to people.

Another aspect to consider for outdoor activities is ticks, which are most active between spring and autumn and which can sometimes transmit diseases such as Lyme disease.

Please could you consider sending out the information, in the first section below, to parents and carers. More details can be found via these links.

[How to stay safe from infections carried by animals when visiting a farm – UK Health Security Agency](#)

Tick Awareness Leaflet

Or visit the [NHS website](#) for more information on signs, symptoms and treatments for Lyme disease.

Farm Visit Advice this Easter

Following the simple rules listed below will help to keep you and your children safe from infections that may be found on open or petting farms. Vulnerable groups need to take particular care as infections acquired from animals can be harmful to them: for pregnant women this also includes their unborn baby.

Things to do:

- Follow any rules and guidelines provided by the farm staff
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after you have touched animals, fences or other surfaces where animals may have been, and dry your hands with paper towels
- Supervise children closely and ensure that they wash their hands thoroughly using liquid soap and warm running water
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating or drinking
- When visiting a farm, only eat and drink in picnic areas or cafes
- Try to avoid wearing open-toed shoes. At the end of your visit remove and clean boots or shoes and clean pushchair wheels. Then wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water
- If you have held or had contact with an animal wash clothing at 40C or hotter when you return home.

Things to avoid:

- Touching your face or mouth while petting animals or walking around the farm
- Kissing or putting your face close to farm animals eating or drinking while touching animals or walking around the farm; this includes avoiding eating sweets, crisps or chewing gum
- Eating anything that has fallen on the floor
- Using sanitising gels or wipes instead of washing hands with liquid soap and warm running water. Sanitising gels and wipes do not remove the type of bugs found on farms effectively

TICKS – Be Tick Aware

Another aspect to consider for outdoor activities is ticks, which are most active between spring and autumn and which can sometimes transmit diseases such as Lyme disease.

There are many actions that can be taken to prevent tick bites, and to remove ticks safely if needed.

Tick advice

The best way to avoid being bitten by ticks when out walking is to keep to footpaths and avoid long grass. Other advice to people walking in areas known to have a high tick population is to:

- Wear appropriate clothing (a long-sleeve shirt and trousers tucked into socks)
- Use an insect repellent
- Wear light-coloured fabrics that may help spot a tick on clothing
- Inspect your skin for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including your head, neck and skin folds (armpits, groin and waist)
- Ask parents and carers to check their children's head and neck areas, including their scalp

How to remove a tick

If you do get bitten by a tick, removing it quickly and correctly can help to reduce any potential risk. The safe way to remove a tick is to use a pair of fine-tipped tweezers, or an easy-to-use device which can be purchased from pharmacies or vets. Then:

- Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull upwards slowly and firmly, as mouth parts left in the skin can cause a local infection*
- Once removed, apply antiseptic to the bite area and keep an eye on it for several weeks for any changes*
- Call NHS 111 if the person begins to feel unwell or develops a circular red skin rash, often described as a bull's-eye rash, and remember to tell them that the person was bitten by a tick.*

Further Guidance for Schools - Reducing the risk of infection when visiting open farms or other animal attractions

- School visits to open farms or animal attractions are great fun and educational
- However, schools need to be aware of the small risk of catching an infection from animals or the environment when visiting a farm and take steps to reduce that risk
- Schools need to ensure their pre-visit risk assessment includes consideration of steps to reduce this risk of infection
- Key guidance:
 - All open farms and animal attractions should be following the Industry Code of Practice to prevent infection: [Code of Practice | Access To Farms \(visitmyfarm.org\)](#)
 - Practical advice to teachers and others who organise visits for children:
 - [Teachers Code of Practice.pdf](#)
 - [how-to-plan-curriculum-linked-and-safe-visits-to-farms-final.pdf](#)
 - [Health Protection in Education Settings – E.coli](#)
 - [Health Protection in Education Settings – Cryptosporidium](#)

Common infections linked to open farm visits

- Infections that animals can pass to humans are called zoonoses
- Common causes of zoonotic infections linked to farms are:
 - *E.coli*, including *E.coli* O157 – present in cattle, sheep but also in other animals such as goats, pigs, deer, alpaca, llama, donkeys, horses...
 - *Cryptosporidium parvum* – found in sheep (particularly lambs), goats, cattle
- These can cause very serious illness, particularly in children, pregnant women, the elderly and anyone who is immunocompromised
- Assume all animals carry micro-organisms – even when they appear healthy and clean

- Infections can be picked up from:
 - the animals, for example when stroking or feeding them
 - the animal's poo, for example when stepping on bedding or on the ground in the animal housing area
 - where the animals are housed, for example on gates, fences, contaminated animal feed

Ways to prevent infection – examples of other things to check onsite

- There is good signage up around the site indicating eating areas, playing areas, animal contact areas, washing facilities
 - Any animal contact is well supervised and in clean areas - Visitors should not be allowed to enter animal pens where the animals are normally housed
- Eating areas are free of any animal contact and are clean
- Pathways are defined and clean
- Play equipment is regularly cleaned. If play equipment is inside, for example a soft play, ensure shoes/boots are removed prior to use of the equipment

More information on Ticks

Lyme Disease UK has created an [awareness pack](#) specifically designed for children of various ages which you might find useful.

Tick awareness poster