

10.7 Visiting farms

Specific points for preparing to take young people on farm visits:

- Ensure that all involved in the visit are familiar with their own establishment and the LEA guidelines on school journeys.
- Check that the farm is well managed, e.g. has a good reputation for high standards and stock welfare, that the grounds and public areas are as clean as possible and that suitable first aid arrangements are made. The party may wish to consider taking a travelling first aid kit on the visit. Animals should not have access to any outdoor picnic areas. A prior visit to the farm by a member of staff is advisable wherever possible. Is the farm a 'working' farm or a 'show' farm?
- Check that the farm has suitable washing facilities, appropriately signposted, with running water (preferably hot and cold), soap and disposable towels or hot-air hand dryer(s). Any drinking-water taps should be clearly labelled in a suitable area.
- Ensure that suitable precautions are in place where appropriate – e.g. clear signs or restricted access in areas such as near slurry pits or where sick animals are isolated.
- Ensure that there is an adequate number of adults to supervise the children, taking into account the age and stage of development of the young people. Ensure that adults are suitably briefed regarding the checklist. Very young children (under 5) will need an adult hand per child – i.e. a ratio of 1:2.
- Female visitors to farms should be warned that there is a possible risk of diseases being transmitted to pregnant women during lambing time.
- Good hygiene arrangements should be discussed with the young people. This should include washing hands and not putting hands into mouths.
- Prepare young people for the visit by explaining the expected standards of behaviour and the importance of following any rules, e.g. shutting gates.
- Inform parents/children of the advantages of wearing footwear that can be easily cleaned. Wellington boots are ideal footwear, but any closed shoe is preferable to open footwear.
- Explain that visitors should not eat or drink anything, including chewing gum, etc. while touring the farm, because of the risk of infection and risk of contact with toxic pesticides and other chemicals.
- Visitors should be aware of the dangers posed by farm machinery and chemicals used on farms.

During the visit:

- If visitors are in contact with, or feeding, farm animals, they should not place their faces against the animals or put their hands in their own mouths afterwards.
- Before contact with animals, ensure cuts and grazes (especially on hands) are covered with waterproof plasters. After contact with animals and particularly before eating and drinking, ensure all visitors wash and dry their hands thoroughly. If young children are in the group, hand-washing will need to be supervised.
- Meal breaks or snacks should be taken well away from areas where animals are kept, and visitors should not eat anything that may have fallen on the ground. Any crops produced on the farm should be thoroughly washed in drinking water before consumption. Water for drinking and food-washing should be taken only from taps clearly labelled as drinking water.
- Ensure visitors do not consume un-pasteurised produce, e.g. milk or cheese, or taste animal feedstuffs, such as silage and concentrates.
- Manure or slurry presents a particular risk of infection. Visitors should not touch it, and any cuts or grazes should be covered with waterproof plasters. If visitors do touch manure or slurry, they should thoroughly wash and dry their hands immediately.

At the end of the visit:

- Ensure all visitors wash their hands thoroughly before departure.
- Ensure footwear is as free as possible from faecal material.