

RISK ASSESSMENT
For Group Visits to Marsh Farm Country Park

Establishment	Marsh Farm Open Farm Trail
Activity	Group Visit

Significant Hazards

- Animal bites
- New or old wounds becoming infected
- Ill health from germs spread from animals to humans(zoonoses) e.g. E-coli & leptospirosis
- Miscarriage from transfer of twin lamb disease to pregnant women from sheep and lambs
- Injury from contact with farm machinery
- Hay fever, asthma and allergies to animals
- Scratches, cuts and bites
- Falls from height from climbing on haystacks, machinery, fences or gates etc.
- Touching or ingesting chemicals or animal treatments
- Climbing on gates/fences and leaving gates open
- Being kicked, trampled or crushed by dangerous animals/ escaped animals
- Falling into or contact with animal waste areas/dung heaps/ponds/borrowdykes
- Fire
- Lost children wandering off the farm trail
- Slips and trips

Who is at Risk?

- Employees
- Visitors
- Pregnant Women
- Children and Elderly visitors with existing health problems such as allergies, respiratory disease, low immune systems and also those with physical or learning disabilities.

Existing Control Measures - How to minimise the risk

- **Hand Washing.** The risk of catching most germs on farms can be eliminated by good hygiene. Hands must be thoroughly washed with soap and hot running water and then dried with a paper towel. There are hand washing facilities in the sheep shed, dairy, piggery and the two toilet blocks. Signs remind visitors to wash their hands after contact with the animals, before eating and before they leave the farm. Young children should be supervised and may not be able to keep their hands under hot water long enough to kill all germs. They should therefore be encouraged to wash under cold water for at least a minute and to use the anti bacterial soap provided. Very young children, who are likely to put their hands in their mouths should either be discouraged from touching the animals or should have their hands washed or wiped immediately after contact. Areas where there are no hand washing facilities should have anti- bacterial hand cleanser dispensers for your use, although this is not a substitute for proper hand washing.

- **Eating.** Food should only be eaten in designated areas i.e. the classroom, tea-room, lunch marquees or picnic areas. Under no circumstances should food be eaten in animal contact areas e.g. Pet Barn.
- **Clothing.** Sturdy outdoor shoes or Wellington boots should be worn, especially if entering animal paddocks when invited. Open shoes or sandals are not advisable.
- **Feeding the animals.** Children should hold their hands out flat when feeding the animals and should not put their fingers into the animals' mouths. They should only feed food sold at the farm and should not taste the animal feed. They should not feed it to wild birds nor where there are 'no feeding' signs. Children and adults should wash their hands before and then directly afterwards.
- **Cuts and Scratches.** These should be cleaned thoroughly and covered up immediately. Old wounds should also be covered. There are two first aid points on the farm, one at the Visitor Centre and the other at the farm office.
- **Pregnant Women.** If you are pregnant or suspect you might be pregnant you should stay away from any pregnant ewes and lambs. This is to avoid the transfer of micro-organisms that can cause illness. Signs should be present at lambing times.
- **Tools, Equipment and Farm Machinery.** These should all be stored away from public areas but could be around whilst in use. Visitors should be advised never to touch these nor climb onto a farm vehicle without invitation by a member of farm staff.
- **Haystacks.** These can be particularly dangerous to young children, as they are attractive as climbing frames or in which to make dens. They can be very unstable and they are at risk from falling off or from bales falling on top of them. Hay and straw dust can also trigger allergies and breathing difficulties. The Hay and Straw storage areas at Marsh Farm are not on the farm trail and the risk can be minimised by keeping to the farm trail and by adequate supervision.
- **Chemicals and Animal Treatments.** These should all be locked away and in areas not accessible to the public. Children should be warned not to touch any items that are being used by farm staff to treat an animal in front of the public.
- **Fire.** There are many flammable substances on farms. Use of matches should be restricted and no smoking signs strictly observed. In case of fire, please sound the alarm, evacuate the buildings, call 999 or alert a member of staff and assemble in the outdoor play area.
- **Contact with Animals.** Animals should be approached quietly and carefully and treated with respect. They should only be handled when farm staff give permission or signs permit visitors to do so. If an animal escapes, please do not approach it, alert a member of farm staff. Keep animals away from your face to minimise the risk of direct contact with animal saliva.
- **Tractor and Trailer Rides.** This ride is given along a farm track using a specially designed passenger trailer. There is always a member of farm staff on the trailer to ensure visitor safety. We advise visitors to remain seated whilst the tractor is moving. Do not get onto the trailer unless a member of Marsh Farm staff is present.
- **Animal Paddocks and Pens.** Going into the animal enclosures by invitation increases the risk of animal faeces getting onto your footwear. This then increases the risk of germs being transferred. This risk can be minimised by either bringing a change of footwear in a plastic bag or cleaning footwear before leaving the farm.

- **Milking Demonstrations.** Visitors should remain behind the barriers unless invited by the farm staff to participate. They should not attempt to dip their fingers into or taste the milk from the bucket.
- **Farm Trail.** Visitors should stay on the farm trail at all times. Staff should ensure gates are shut.
- **Supervision.** The group leader should ensure that the group is split into smaller groups, adequately supervised by responsible adults/leaders. Staffing ratios should be decided by a pre visit risk assessment and should take into account the age, ability and characteristics of the group and the nature of the activities planned. All leaders should be properly briefed and know what to do in an emergency. Supervisors must understand the need for hand washing after contact with the animals and are responsible for ensuring that the children wash their hands thoroughly.
- **Accidents.** All accidents, incidents and any injuries, however minor, should be communicated to a member of staff, who will complete an accident form and take any necessary action.
- **Additional Activities.** If your group is involved in an activity not covered above, please request the risk assessment that covers that activity from farm staff prior to your visit.
- **After your visit.** Any person who becomes ill following a visit to the farm and feels that they may have contracted an infection from an animal should immediately contact their GP and clearly describe the level of contact that they have had with that animal. Parents/guardians should be made aware of the risks following contact with animals.

Assessment carried out by Karen Latham

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For more detailed information about Health and Safety on farms, please contact:

- Jimmy Allan or Karen Latham at Marsh Farm on (01245) 321552
 - National Association of Farms for Schools (FFS) (01422 885566) of which Marsh Farm is a member www.farmsforschools.org.uk . Download 'The Guide for Teachers visiting countryside events involving schools'.
 - Health & Safety Executive (01245) 706208 or HSE Infoline 0845 3450055
- Ask for the following publications: HSE Agriculture Information Sheet No 23 (revised) Avoiding Ill Health at Open Farms- advice to farmers (with teacher's supplement). E-coli 0157.
- DEFRA www.defra.gov.uk