

Health and Safety, Biosecurity and Insurance Guidance Notes

Hosts need to pay close attention to health and safety issues as a part of the planning of an enjoyable event.

The key point is to manage risk, we do not live in a risk-free world so don't think you have to create one. Look at everything on the farm walk route through the eyes of children. If a hazard is too much of a risk, i.e. walking down a steep slope, avoid it by taking a different route. You can talk about something at a distance and so not have to undertake expensive health and safety protection that may be necessary if you were standing next to it. The following checklist may be useful when preparing for the visit (:

- Undertake a risk assessment to plan a safe route avoiding particularly busy areas.
- Block access to hazardous areas. Temporary signs can be used if visits are infrequent. If visits are a main part of the business, permanent signage should be installed.
- Make sure protective equipment is in place.
- Blank off or remove ladders.
- Keep children away from mature, grazing male livestock and from female livestock with young.
- Procedures using hazardous substances should not take place during a visit.
- Lock away vet's medicines, pesticides etc.
- Avoid railings likely to be covered in manure.
- Clean walkways prior to the visit, if possible
- Provide hand washing facilities – this is vital. Running water and disposable paper towels should be provided.
- Organise a designated eating area away from animals and hazardous activities.
- If you use a trailer to transport visitors around the unit you should read the enclosed HSE Guidance 'Carriage of passengers on farm trailers.'
- Let your insurers know.

Further detail and guidance is outlined below.

Insurance

You must tell your insurer what you are doing. Most companies will not increase premiums as long as they are told in advance, so talk to them or your broker. Check you have £5-£10 million Public Liability. Cost of increasing from £5m to £10m is about £200/yr.

Signage

Put up clear signs to guide your visitors to where you want them, especially if there is more than one entrance or place to park. Even then some people will park in the wrong place. Try and avoid deliveries to the farm at the same time as a visit, it removes a possible risk factor.

Biosecurity

Put out foot dipping baths. 25 Lt drums cut in half length-ways make good ones, especially if they are square in cross-section. Have a brush available to wash your farm dirt off after the walk. It shows you are responsible to your visitors.

Also be aware of E-coli risks and other zoonoses (things we can catch from animals). If you have visitors at lambing time warn female visitors about abortion causing organism if they are pregnant.

A place to meet and toilets

Clear an old unused building or area to meet in, which could be left tidy for your next visit (saving the time of tidying up a used area like a corn store or livestock building, or having hoards tramping through your house).

Toilets can be a problem but something can be worked out: Sign posts to nearest one. You could even hire a portaloos and ask for donations from your visitors!

If you offer tea and biscuits you should have hand-washing facilities although you can have anti-septic hand wipes available or antibacterial hand gel which does not require water, again warn people who may be sensitive to chemicals.

Carrying out a Risk Assessment

RoSPA (the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) has prepared the following notes. As a safety education tool they can be used to ensure awareness of the hazards and discuss any safety measures that are in place, if these are considered adequate and what possible improvements could be made.

It may be useful to first define hazard and risk.

- 'Risk' expresses the likelihood that the harm from a particular hazard will be realised (for example the risk of slipping on a patch of water).
- A 'hazard' is something with a potential to cause harm (the patch of water).
- Hazards only present a risk when there is human interaction (someone treading in the patch of water).
- A risk assessment involves identifying the hazards present then evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account any precautions already in place (identifying the patch of water as a potential problem; noting that it will be walked past; a verbal or written warning).

Identify the hazards:

What hazards are the visitors likely to face?

What kinds of behaviour will increase the risk?

Which hazards pose a significant risk if they are not managed?

How can these risks be controlled?

Might these measures create other hazards?

Assess the risk:

How serious is the risk? (i.e. the potential injury or consequence).

What might increase the severity of injury? (e.g. running, the age of the person).

Who and how many are exposed to the risk?

How likely is it to occur? (previous accidents/incidents and the frequency of exposure to the hazard).

Controlling the risk:

Can the risk be avoided or minimised? Is the activity necessary? Does the educational social advantage outweigh the risk? Are warnings provided – written, verbal?

Can the hazard be eliminated, avoided or substituted?

Can environmental controls – alterations to physical surroundings or features, mechanisation etc – minimise or remove exposure to risk?

Can safer systems of work/play/activity be adopted? (e.g. by establishing a procedure or set of rules, providing better information, providing skills through training).

Is the use of personal protective equipment indicated where risk remains?

When should we assess the risks?

- The host farmer should be reviewing hazards on an on-going basis and employing risk assessment techniques.
- A friend or neighbour should make a pre-event check on the location's risks. This is best carried out with the host. If the farm is not open to visits on a frequent basis, the host may not be familiar with hazards which may present themselves to children. The friend or neighbour should point out any hazards that they feel need management.

What are the risks?

These are many and varied and exist in all areas of life – not just on the farm! Some of the most common causes of accidents are:

- Slipping (wet surfaces in a glasshouse)
- Tripping (hoses lying around)
- Falls from a height (ladders, platforms)
- Contact with moving vehicles (cars, tractors, fork lift trucks)
- Fire
- Being trapped (collapsing hay bales, grain stores)
- Exposure to cold/wet
- Exposure to sun/heat
- Exposure to infection

A number of hazards can be specific to farm locations.

- Failure to safeguard machinery
- Failure to safeguard toxic substances, slurry pits and gases.
- Failure to safeguard flammable substances such as oil, fuel, hay and straw
- Frantic farm activity
- Male animals grazing, female animals with young

All of the above hazards pose risks that can be managed. Many of them can be eliminated at the pre-visit stage.

You are advised to read the guidance contained in the Health and Safety Executive publication '[Avoiding ill health at open farms - Advice to farmers \(with teachers' supplement\)](#)' and if you plan tractor and trailer rides the guidance notes on '[Passengers on farm trailers](#)'