



National  
Guidance

[oeapng.info](http://oeapng.info)

## Farm Visits

This guidance can be applied, as appropriate, to visits to a wide range of venues including rural farms, hill farms, city farms, children’s farms, petting farms, farm parks and zoos. Some of these are specifically designed for educational visits, some are working farms with provision for visits, and others are working farms which have no dedicated visitor facilities but which welcome occasional visitors by prior arrangement or through which visitors can pass on public rights of way.

### Benefits of Farm Visits

Often young people living in cities do not link farms and the countryside with the food that they buy in shops and supermarkets, so by visiting farms they may learn first-hand how and where their food is produced and how farmers work through the seasons planting and growing crops and looking after their animals.

There are benefits for young people from just being on a farm, meeting people from different walks of life, seeing animals close up, experiencing the freedom of green open spaces, and being close to nature. A well-planned visit can enhance all areas of the curriculum and engage pupils’ senses, bring science to life, develop vocabulary and provide a stimulating experience for creative writing. Farm visits provide an opportunity to learn about the importance of animal welfare, maintaining the countryside and careers in agriculture.

Farm visits can also help to inform young people about a future in which over nine billion people will need to be fed.

### Choosing a Farm to Visit

See also document 4.4h “Using External Providers and Facilities”.

If possible, the farm visited should hold a Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge. This provides assurance that the farm has good safety and educational quality standards, and that farms offering active involvement of children in farming practices, or the handling of livestock, have been externally inspected.

If a farm does not have a LOTC Quality Badge, you should look for other accreditation or recommendations and check what they mean. For example:

- The Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS) ([visitmyfarm.org](http://visitmyfarm.org)) trains farmers to prepare curriculum-linked safe educational activities relevant to the pupils visiting their farm;
- The charity LEAF Education ([education.leafuk.org](http://education.leafuk.org)) works across the education, farming and food sectors providing suggestions for farms to visit, and can put teachers in touch with accredited farms and with farmers who will go into school;
- The Soil Association's Food for Life programme provides farmers with help and advice on setting up farm visits, and its website has a lot of resources for schools, including a farm finder at [www.foodforlife.org.uk/schools/what-can-you-do/visit-a-farm](http://www.foodforlife.org.uk/schools/what-can-you-do/visit-a-farm);
- The Country Trust charity ([www.countrytrust.org.uk/services/farm-visits](http://www.countrytrust.org.uk/services/farm-visits)) provides support for farm visits by schools whose pupils are less able to access the countryside;
- The website [www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk](http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk) provides teachers with ideas for places to visit, educational resources and expert advice.

If you are planning a visit to a farm which does not regularly host educational visits, you may need to work with the farmer to ensure that the visit can take place safely. For example, public footpaths may pass close to hazards such as machinery, barbed wire, silos, slurry pits, ponds or stacked bales, or through fields or yards with potentially dangerous animals such as dogs, cattle, horses, pigs or bees.

## Health Considerations

Visits to farms involve some risks, as do visits to other workplaces. All animals carry micro-organisms, such as E coli 0157 (a bacterium) and Cryptosporidium (a parasite), some of which can be transmitted to humans. These and Weil's Disease (from contaminated water) or Lyme Disease (from infected ticks) can cause serious illness. However the risk of infection can be readily controlled by everyday measures. Preparation and planning will minimise the risks (see "During Your Visit" below). Parents should be fully informed about the nature of the visit, how the risks will be managed and what to be aware of following a visit.

For advice about Lyme Disease see [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lyme-disease](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lyme-disease).

For advice about Weil's Disease see [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Leptospirosis](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Leptospirosis).

Visit leaders should inform women, including young women participants, about the risk of infection to anyone who is pregnant or of contact with animals that are giving, or have recently given, birth. This is particularly the case with sheep but also cattle and goats.

## Preparing for Your Visit

It is good practice for the Visit Leader to carry out a preliminary visit to meet those who may support them during the visit and to become familiar with:

- The farm site and its facilities;
- Expectations and safety arrangements;
- Contingencies in the event of bad weather.

A farm that holds the LOTC Quality Badge will have good safety standards. If not held, your preliminary visit should also include checking that:

- Eating areas are separate from those where there is any contact with animals;
- There are adequate toilet and hand washing facilities;
- There is clear information for visitors explaining the risks and the precautions to be taken;
- Slurry pools and sheep dips are fenced off;
- Areas containing chemicals are secured;
- Moving farm traffic is properly managed with traffic-free areas for groups to meet and be briefed;
- There has been a risk assessment of any planned manual work or use of machinery;
- Transport for visitors involving a trailer conforms to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance - see [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais36.pdf).

You may need to brief your group about:

- Where you are going and why;
- Links to the curriculum;
- The sights, sounds and smells to be expected;
- How they should behave, especially around animals;
- What to bring and wear;
- Any particular hazards and how they can be avoided.

In preparation there is the opportunity to engage participants in aspects affecting their safety and the safety of others, and what they will need to do at the farm. Young people taking an active part in decisions about managing risk is not only good practice but more likely to lead to willing and understanding compliance.

The CEVAS website [visitmyfarm.org](http://visitmyfarm.org) includes advice on preparing for a farm visit.

## During Your Visit

Depending on the nature of the venue and the participants, the Visit Leader should ensure that the following DOs and DON'Ts are applied.

### DO:

- Cover cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing;
- If necessary, use a change of footwear (e.g. wellington boots) during the visit, and/or clean footwear when leaving the farm;
- Ensure there is adequate supervision, especially wherever participants can come into contact with animals;
- Ensure everyone washes their hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water, and then dries their hands on paper towels, after touching animals, before eating or drinking, and on leaving the farm (most gels and wipes which might be used as a substitute, for example after a walk through a farm without access to washing facilities, are not as effective as thorough washing).

### DON'T:

- Put fingers in mouths while petting animals or walking around the farm;
- Kiss animals or place faces against them;
- Eat or drink while going round the farm;
- Sample animal food;
- Drink from farm taps (other than designated drinking water taps);
- Touch animal droppings;
- Ride on vehicles – other than those designed or modified, and insured, to carry passengers;
- Play or climb on tractors, farm machinery or stacked bales unless identified for the purpose;
- Play in the working farm area, or in other areas that are out of bounds, such as silos, slurry pits etc.;
- Use machinery, or engage in manual work, unless the risks have been properly assessed and managed.

## After Your Visit

If a member of your group shows signs of illness after a visit (e.g. flu-like symptoms, diarrhoea, rash), advise them or their parent to seek medical attention directly and explain that they have had recent contact with animals. Also contact the farm you visited and inform them of the illness.

