

**Hygiene Advice for Organisers of Trips to Petting Farms**

As the nice weather approaches many people including organisations such as schools will consider visiting farms where children can enjoy petting and feeding farm animals. To make sure that everyone enjoys the day and children or staff do not suffer any following illness, Shropshire Council’s Public Protection Team are giving the following advice: -

All animals naturally carry a range of germs which can easily be passed to humans, these include the bacteria *E coli 0157* and the parasite *Cryptosporidia*. Both of these can cause a very severe illness of diarrhoea and vomiting, particularly in children and only small amounts of the germs are needed to become ill. Illness can occur when the germs from the animals are transferred to the mouth after touching animals, fences, footwear or other surfaces that may be contaminated by animal droppings. This can also occur when food is eaten with unwashed contaminated hands. Therefore the following precautions need to be taken during the visit (and also when you get home).

Precautions at the visit

* Children must be supervised at all times.
* Do not allow children to put hands on faces or fingers in mouths while walking around the farm. Adults should not smoke during the visit.
* Do not allow children to eat anything that may have fallen on the ground. This includes dummies.
* If touching or feeding animals, you should ensure that children do not put their faces close to the animals mouths or put their fingers in their own or anyone else’s mouths. Keep away from sick animals, manure or slurry.
* Eat and drink in designated eating areas only – never while touching animals or while walking around the farm. This includes not eating sweets, crisps or chewing gum.
* **Ensure hands are washed and dried thoroughly with soap and water immediately after any contact with animals and BEFORE eating and drinking. Supervise children when washing their hands. Hand gels/wipes are not an acceptable substitute for proper hand washing.**
* Everyone should wash and dry their hands thoroughly before leaving.
* Remove mud from pushchairs, footwear etc. before loading into the car.

Precautions after the visit

* Footwear and pushchairs may still have contaminated mud on them. If it was not possible to clean at the visit, hose pushchairs wheels with water and clean footwear. Wash hands thoroughly.
* Wash any muddy clothes on a 600C wash.
* **NB Pregnant women need to take particular care and specifically avoid direct contact with lambs and their droppings.**

What should I do if I or children feel unwell after a visit?

If you or anyone else in your group, particularly children, feels unwell with sickness and diarrhoea within 2 weeks after visiting a farm, you/parent should contact your GP or call NHS direct on 0845 4647 or www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk. A faecal sample may be taken and analysed. If it is positive for food poisoning germs you will be contacted by an officer from the Public Protection Team who will provide further advice and guidance.

If ill, children under five should not attend school/nursery/ group childcare until they have stopped being ill for at least 2 days. This is also applies to adults who work in those settings or handle food as part of their job. Further advice should be obtained from the Public Protection Team on 0345 678 9000 or email food@shropshire.gov.uk.



Further information is available on

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-visits-avoiding-infection>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infection-risk-at-petting-farms-phe-urges-good-hand-hygiene>