

Enjoy your farm visit safely

Don't let bugs ruin your day

Understand more about the risks of catching infections from farm animals and what to do if you feel unwell after your visit.

Even when they look healthy animals can carry bugs which can be passed onto you and make you poorly. Some of these infections can be serious for children and pregnant women.

Common illnesses include *Cryptosporidium parvum*, *E. coli* O157, and *Salmonella*, causing symptoms like diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, nausea, and body aches. All these bacteria live in the gut of animals.

Infections are caused either by touching animals or having contact with animal droppings on contaminated surfaces around the farm. These harmful bacteria can get passed on by putting your hands on your face or fingers in your mouth before washing them thoroughly.

You can't see the bugs, so your hands may appear clean, but it only takes a small number of the bacteria to cause an infection.

Please follow this advice to avoid catching an infection:

- ✓ Check cuts, grazes etc on children's hands are covered with waterproof dressing.
- ✓ Stay a safe distance from animals and follow the visitor guidance.
- ✓ Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water
 - after touching animals, fences or other surfaces in animal areas
 - before eating or drinking.
- ✓ Supervise children closely to ensure they have washed their hands thoroughly.
- ✓ Only eat and drink in picnic areas or cafes.
- ✓ Avoid contact with sheep and lambs while pregnant.
- ✓ After visiting remove your shoes and clean them, and any other things that may have come into contact with the ground such as pushchair wheels. Then wash your hands.
- ✓ If you have had direct contact with an animal, wash your clothing and other fabrics at 40°C or hotter.
- ✗ Never touch your face or mouth whilst petting animals or walking around the farm.
- ✗ Do not use handwipes instead of washing hands with liquid soap and warm water. Handwipes do not remove *E. coli* O157 in dirt.
- ✗ Keep animals away from your face, this includes not snuggling or kissing them!
- ✗ Don't eat anything that has fallen on the floor.
- ✗ Do not eat or drink whilst touching animals, being near animals or walking around the farm.
- ✗ Be mindful of what else you are touching when on the farm, such as phones and screens.
- ✗ Do not taste or eat any animal foods or unpasteurised produce, such as milk or cheese.

Infections can be serious for young children, pregnant women, elderly people and people with a weakened immune system.

Pregnant women in close contact with lambing sheep risk their health and that of their unborn child due to possible infections. Although rare, the consequences can be serious.

Pregnant women and those more vulnerable to infection should avoid contact with aborted or newborn lambs, calves, kids, afterbirth, birthing fluids, and contaminated materials.

They should also avoid handling (including washing) clothing, boots, or materials exposed to animals that have recently given birth.

These risks are not only associated with sheep, nor confined only to the spring (when the majority of lambs are born). Cattle and goats that have recently given birth can also carry similar infections.

What to do if you feel unwell after a farm visit

If you or anyone in your group feels unwell or has any symptoms such as diarrhoea or vomiting within 2 weeks of visiting a farm, contact your GP or call NHS 111 as soon as possible.

If you or anyone in your group - particularly if they are a young child or fall into a vulnerable group - has bloody diarrhoea, seek immediate emergency medical attention.

Anyone who has experienced sickness or diarrhoea after visiting a farm could pass the illness on to others, so they should not attend work, school or nursery until they have been free of symptoms for at least 2 days. However, with infections from some bugs, extra tests may be needed to ensure they have fully recovered and will not pass on the infection to others before starting back at work, school or nursery.

People who handle food, children under 5 years and those who work closely with people who may be vulnerable to infections should discuss with their GP or local health protection team before returning to work, school or nursery.

Please also inform our Environmental Health team. Contact us on **0300 131 2 131** (please say 'Environmental Health' when prompted) or visit www.northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us

Further information:

- ❖ Visit our guidance at www.northyorks.gov.uk/farmvisits
- ❖ Visit the UK Health Security Agency webpage www.gov.uk/government/publications/farm-visits-avoiding-infection
- ❖ Further information on infections that spread from animals to humans is available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/zoonotic-diseases-zoonoses-guidance-data-and-analysis
- ❖ An information hub for farmers and teachers looking for help on educational visits to farms is available at My Farm visitmyfarm.org/