Press Release

23 March 2021

FINAL

**Updated Industry Code of Practice for animal visitor attractions published.**

In response to the future easing of lockdown, an updated Industry Code of Practice for preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions, has been released to ensure that the public, and particularly children, are safe when interacting with animals.

The revised Code of Practice provides sensible, practical and proportionate guidance on preventing or controlling ill health at these venues. It gives clear guidance on practical measures that can be applied to ensure businesses comply with the law and keep visitors, customers, and staff safe.

Written by industry for industry, in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the code is aimed at farmers, owners, operators and managers of visitor attractions. It applies to a whole range of attractions including: conventional farms that open to the public once a year; farm shops with livestock close by; mobile petting farms; city farms; school visits to farms; farm parks which welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors throughout the year; agricultural shows and country fairs.

The HSE has issued the following endorsement:

*“The Health and Safety Executive was consulted in the production of this publication. It endorses the sensible, proportionate, reasonable and balanced advice to owners on managing visitor health and safety set out in the Industry Code of Practice.”*

The code has also gained support from The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health:

*“The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health supports the adoption and promotion of this Industry Code of Practice and believes that compliance with these standards will be the means to minimise risks to health from visitor contact with animals."*

All animals naturally carry a range of microorganisms and, in rare occasions when passed from animals to humans, these can cause illness ranging from diarrhoea through to kidney failure and can even be fatal. Therefore, it is vital all those seeking to welcome visitors adhere to the code and ensure that members of the public are informed and aware of the procedures in place to keep them safe.

The Access to Farms partners, which revises and updates the code, continue to highlight the critical role that good hygiene, particularly hand washing, plays in keeping each other safe. With society accustomed to using hand sanitisers in the fight against COVID, it is important to note that antibiotic hand gels are not an effective substitute to hand washing. In particular gels are not effective against the Cryptosporidium zoonotic disease.

Within the latest version of the code, ‘look and see’ areas are now considered and addressed according to risk. There are more robust requirements of double fencing where possible and is reasonable. The revised code also now includes a section on mobile petting farms.

The Access to Farms partnership includes representatives of a number of organisations whose members encourage visitors, especially children, to visit their farm attraction, farm or other premises to view, touch or pet animals.

To view the Revised Industry Code of Practice visit: <https://www.visitmyfarm.org/component/k2/339-industry-code-of-practice>

Farm and animal attractions should only open to the public in-line with governmental [Covid roadmaps](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reopening-businesses-and-venues-in-england), and should consider [Covid controls](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=refferal&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_term=banner-2&utm_content=home-page-banner), where appliable.

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**Editors’ notes:**

* The latest edition of the Industry Code of Practice is version 3, published on 23rd March 2021. Available to view here: <https://www.visitmyfarm.org/component/k2/339-industry-code-of-practice>
* This Industry Code of Practice was produced and is monitored by the Access to Farms partnership which includes representatives of a number of organisations whose members encourage visitors, especially children, to visit their farm attraction, farm or other attraction to view, touch or pet animals.
* The Access to Farms members includes representatives from: Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations; Countryside Learning; LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming); LEAF Education; The Country Trust; National Farm Attractions Network; Social Farms and Gardens; The Ernest Cook Trust; Natural England; National Farmers Union; The Royal Highland Education Trust; Soil Association; The National Trust; The CLA; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Tenant Farmers Association.
* This Industry Code of Practice is based on guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Agriculture Information Sheet No 23(rev2) ‘Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions’ (AIS23), which has been withdrawn. Public Health England (PHE), (now National Institute for Health Protection), set up an Independent Investigation Committee chaired by Professor Griffin the report of which, ‘Review of the major outbreak of E. coli O157 in Surrey, 2009’ was published in June 2010 and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/escherichia-coli-e-coli-o157-report-and-recommendations-from-2009-godstone-incident> The first Industry Code of Practice was developed and published by the Access to Farms partnership soon after the Griffin report was released in 2010.
* **Premises covered by the Code of Practice** include animal visitor attractions such as:
  + - Farm attractions such as open farms and farm parks.
    - Animal contact enclaves within other attractions, including those at zoos.
    - City farms or other educational establishments.
    - Working farms with livestock that occasionally open to the public, e.g. for school visits or to participate in Open Farm Sunday or similar events.
    - Rare breed and rescue centres.
    - Agricultural shows or country fairs where livestock are present.
    - Travelling menageries or mobile petting enterprises.
    - Other similar visitor attractions at which the public have contact with animals.

Whilst the general principles covered in this document are equally applicable to zoos, specific guidance on managing zoonotic disease (disease passed from animals to humans) in zoos is contained in HSE guidance Managing zoonotic risk in zoos and wildlife parks.

* This Code of Practice **does not apply** to the following destinations except where they may have an animal contact enclave:
  + - Moors and mountains
    - Historic properties
    - Forests
    - Way marked trails
    - Waterways
    - Open countryside
    - Visitor centres
    - Nature reserves
    - Footpaths
    - Country parks
    - Archaeological remains

For these settings, guidance in the Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside: Principles and Practice booklet is applicable. This guidance is produced by the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group.

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