



VEROCYTOXIGENIC *ESCHERICHIA COLI*

Recommendations to prevent VTEC on Open/Pet Farms

26th March, 2010

v1.2

The following recommendations on prevention of VTEC (Verocytotoxic *Escherichia coli* *E. coli* O157) on Open and Pet Farms have been adapted from the *Report of the HPSC Sub-Committee on Verotoxigenic E. coli* (full report available at <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Gastroenteric/VTEC/Guidance/File,1458,en.pdf>).

The Farm Environment

- Public areas should be kept as clean as possible.
- Legible notices should indicate restricted areas, toilets, and handwashing facilities.
- Animal feed should not be accessible to visitors.
- Public access to dung, compost heaps, and areas of manure and waste disposal should be prohibited.
- Drainage should be well maintained.
- Measures should be taken to control pests, in particular rodents and flies.

Animal Health

- The health status of livestock should be checked by the attending veterinary surgeon; this applies particularly to new or imported animals.
- New livestock whose health is uncertain should be isolated from visitors.
- Sick animals, stressed animals and those which have just given birth or just been born should be isolated from visitors.
- Housing and pens should be secure.

Visitors to the Farm

- Close supervision of visitors, particularly children, is necessary if direct contact with animals is likely. Children under the age of five should be very closely supervised in the presence of any animals
- Children should be advised not to put their fingers in their mouths.
- Visitors should be advised to wash their hands before eating and drinking, especially if they have handled the animals.
- Pregnant women should be advised not to handle lambs.
- Visitors should clean or change their footwear before leaving the farm.
- Visitors should report any illness (e.g. vomiting or diarrhoea), which occurs after visiting an open farm, to their GP. The GP should be advised of recent contact with the farm animals.

Catering Facilities

Any catering facility provided will require prior registration with the HSE Area. Farm shops are subject to inspection by Environmental Health Officers. Further information can be obtained by contacting the local Environmental Health Department of the HSE.

If food is served to visitors on the farm, ensure that:

- Foodhandlers are properly trained.
- There are adequate cooking facilities.
- There are adequate refrigeration facilities.
- Food is eaten only in designated areas.
- Picnic areas are fenced and gated to prevent access by farm and other animals.

With regard to drinking water, ensure that:

- Drinking water is of a potable quality.
- Taps that dispense drinking water are clearly labelled.
- Facilities are provided to wash ground crops such as strawberries, particularly if they are to be eaten on site.

Toilet & Washing Facilities

Ensure that the following are provided:

- Adequate toilet facilities.
- Adequate handwashing / hand-drying facilities including hand soap, hot running water, and disposable towels/hot air dryers accessible to adults and children (children's handwashing should be supervised by adults).

General Measures

- More general measures include the availability of first aid boxes and ready access to telephone numbers of emergency services.
- Visitors should not be permitted to bag compost. If bagged compost is supplied for domestic use, consumers should be advised to wash their hands after using the compost