



National Farm Attractions Network

NFAN STATEMENT –E.COLI 0157

12th October 2009

NFAN has been active in direct consultation with the three major organisations concerned, namely the Health Protection Agency (HPA), the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and the LACORS (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services).

The NFAN has had consistent communication with the HPA, both with its media representative and Director of Communication, Mrs Birrane. The current position is that we are meeting this in London on 13th October with the HPA, HSE and LACORS.

The NFAN has advised all members to refer to the latest HSE Guidance information sheet AIS 23 “Avoiding Ill Health at Open Farms – Advice to Farmers (with teachers supplement) June 2009.”

NFAN has had direct communication with HSE’s Bernardine Cooney and will be contributing if it is felt appropriate to any revision on the HSE AIS 23.

There have been a number of concerns from NFAN members, specifically in relation to inconsistency of advice from local Environmental Health Officers at local councils and particularly in regard to whether double fencing is going to be proposed and children under 5 being prohibited from petting areas. We have had confirmation from HSE and LACORS that there are no such proposals currently being discussed and/or promoted.

It would be extremely helpful for NFAN to receive further information from members regarding specific issues of inconsistency in advice or guidance that has been given from Environmental Health Officers in different councils and regions. We can then endeavour to address these and give our support where necessary.

NFAN is in direct communication with Mark Du Val, Director of Policy at LACORS, in relation to its endeavours to ask all Environmental Health Officers from councils visiting, inspecting or offering advice to farm attractions to use HSE AIS 23 as the basis of such advice. This guidance explains the law and gives advice on assessing the risk arising from E.Coli 0157. We believe the AIS23 guidance is relevant and fit for purpose and the basic hygiene advice - the key to avoiding infection from animals - is and is likely to remain sound.

Farmers Guardian has recently announced that it is pleased to be a joint media partner with NFAN and in this regard would be very happy to speak with any NFAN members about the major impact that E.coli 0157 has had upon their business in relation to visitor numbers being down and any cancellations they have had from schools or any other organisations.

If any NFAN member does wish to speak directly with the Farmers Guardian or would like to invite them to visit your attraction, please let us know as soon as possible and we will let them have your full contact details. NFAN will of course be making a statement to the Farmers Guardian.

NFAN as always is keen to ensure that all farm attractions are a safe environment. Ill health following a visit to an open farm is unusual, even among children, and these risks need to be balanced against the benefits for a child’s education and development that arise from contact with animals.