

Lycetts

We know your world.

Care farms advice guide



Proud to protect your countryside. Your estate. Your farm. Your rural business. Your country pursuits. Your passions.

Lycetts has 25 years' experience in the leisure insurance industry and offers expert, impartial insurance broking services for a range of small-scale farms and community ventures.

In addition to public liability insurance cover up to a limit of £5 million, it offers a wealth of specially designed products and services, such as employers' liability and cover for special events.

Care farms are invaluable havens for the rehabilitation and wellbeing of vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds. From ex-offenders to young people with autism, people suffering from alcohol and drug addictions or physical and mental disabilities, care farms provide a sanctuary of support and self-development. They are instrumental in offering social, educational and therapeutic programmes which change the lives of participants.

However, facilitating the safe interaction of people with animals and specialist farm equipment comes with its challenges.

There are numerous factors that need to be considered when ensuring that care farm owners have sufficient protection including hygiene, prevention of disease, visitor access, health and safety plus animal welfare.

Here, we identify the main risks associated with care farm operations and advise on how owners can lower the risk of an incident occurring and avoid the risk of accidents and liability claims.



Please contact us at your convenience to discuss your requirements

Before welcoming new participants

Given the vulnerability of many participants, extra care must be taken to highlight potential dangers and comprehensive and regular training must be provided to members of staff.

Our advice

1. Use signage around the farm featuring plain language and simple pictures to show how to stay safe and healthy when working with animals or using equipment.
2. It is advisable that visiting groups or individuals are given a list of health and safety instructions to adhere to before their arrival on site.
3. Any potential dangers should be clearly signposted at the entrance of the care farm and on the website.
4. Participating groups will be required to carry out risk assessments prior to a visit and this will involve checking that the farm has adequate public liability insurance. Make sure this information is readily available and offers sufficient protection.
5. Ensure you have wheelchair access to all areas and sufficient disabled facilities. www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment
6. Make sure you have a fully-trained first aider available and fully-stocked first aid kit.
7. All staff should be vetted and have had appropriate background checks before they are allowed to interact with children.
8. Inform everyone about fire evacuation procedures and notify them about the location of fire extinguishing equipment. For full information, read this overview www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities
9. Ensure that clear contingency plans are in place in the event of an emergency or unsafe behaviour amongst workers.
10. Inform participants that they cannot bring pets which may cause distress to farm animals.

Put hygiene first

Good hygiene is imperative for the day-to-day running of care farms, particularly due to the vulnerability of some using the facility. It is important to note that outwardly, animals can appear to be healthy but pass on diseases that can cause serious illness in people, such as salmonella and e.coli plus skin conditions such as ringworm.

Our advice

1. Care farm owners should comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and assessments should be completed and ideally documented.
2. Farm owners should urge everyone to wash thoroughly using soap and water after handling animals and before eating or drinking. Adequate signage should be placed at key contact areas on the site, such as feeding areas and cafes.
3. Responsible farm owners should also verbally remind groups to wash their hands, not just after contact with animals but after using machinery or contact with fences or other surfaces exposed to the animals.
4. If running water and soap are not readily available, it would be useful to install alcohol-based hand sanitiser dispensers (at least 60% alcohol).
5. Make sure that some of the handwashing stations are low enough for children or people in wheelchairs to reach.
6. Unborn babies are particularly at risk of infection (especially through contact with lambing ewes). Suitable warning signs should be displayed throughout the farms to alert pregnant women of the potential danger.

Food and drink awareness

Care farm operators should be vigilant about the preparation and consumption of food and drink onsite as this can lead to disease or harm to animals.

Our advice

1. Food and drink for participants should be kept out of the animal areas and food should not be prepared, served or eaten where animals eat and live.
2. Operators are urged not to sell raw, unpasteurised products made onsite including milk, cheese, cider and juice – this can lower the risk of contracting diseases such as brucellosis and salmonella.
3. Provide signage advising visitors not to share food with animals.
4. Reiterate the importance of washing your hands before preparing food or drink and before eating and drinking.

Keeping participants and staff safe

Young children, people with special needs or physical disabilities and those with weakened immune systems should take special care around animals and should be closely supervised. Public liability claims arising from slips, trips and falls onsite should be a serious consideration. Every care should be taken to ensure public areas are kept free from trip hazards and all dangerous equipment and chemicals should be stored safely.

Our advice

1. Any animals displaying aggressive or unpredictable behaviour should be kept away from the participants.
2. Machinery and hazardous equipment should be kept in secure, locked buildings or storage. Usage of such equipment should always be supervised by a professional and personal protective equipment provided if required.
3. Out-of-bounds and staff only areas should be clearly marked.
4. A first aider should be on site and an accident book with comprehensive details of any incidents recorded and signed by all parties – this could help if a public liability claim was filed against the farm.

5. Fences should be maintained regularly. Snags and rusted parts can cause injury or weaknesses in the fences can lead to the animals escaping and posing potential harm to the public.
6. If there is any outbreak of illness, for example a string of cases of E.coli linked to the farm, operations should cease immediately while an investigation is conducted.
7. Provide signage advising visitors not to share food with animals.
8. Reiterate the importance of washing your hands before preparing food or drink and before eating and drinking.

Taking care of animals

The success of any care farm is dependent on its animals – operators must do everything they can to ensure they are happy and healthy. This will allow participants to get the most out of their interaction with the animals

1. Make sure that you have background information on all animals and that they come from a reputable owner.
2. Under the Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990, it is an offence to sell at auction an “unfit” animal. This includes animals that are diseased, ill, injured, lame, deformed or emaciated, or animals likely to give birth.
3. The behaviour of the parents will be a good indicator of how the offspring will react – which is of particular importance as they will be interacting with the public.
4. Keep animals which have recently given birth away from new participants as they are extremely protective of their young.
5. Make sure that a vet carries out a full health check on arrival of new animals and regular check-ups are conducted. Ensure sick animals are kept away from the others and treated as soon as possible
6. Keep health records of immunisations.

The Care Farming Code of Practice

By allowing participants to interact with nature, the land and farming communities, care farms make a huge contribution to the healthcare and wellbeing of so many. People gain knowledge, confidence and skillsets which allow them to make a fresh start in life.

The care farming code of practice is a set of minimum standards which all care farmers should adopt to provide this life-changing service. For more information or advice visit the website below.

www.carefarminguk.org/care-farming-code-practice

Specialist services like yours need specialist advice and cover

Clearly, there are a number of considerations when thinking about the health and safety of running a care farm. Ensuring you have adequate insurance protection is just one. Seeking specialist advice can help you to make a decision on the appropriate policy and level of cover that suits your particular set of circumstances.

If you would like a complimentary review of your insurance, please get in touch with Lycetts.

Summary checklist*

Hygiene

- Comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Assessments are carried out and ideally documented
- Visitors are urged to wash their hands thoroughly using soap and water after contact with animals or surfaced exposed to animals
- Adequate signage is displayed across the site, particularly in key contact areas
- Make clear that adults are responsible for the hygiene of their dependents
- Alcohol hand sanitizer dispensers are installed where running water is not readily available. Encourage visitors to wash their hands as soon as a sink is available
- Handwashing stations are low enough for children and people in wheelchairs to use
- Follow the Industry Code of Practice and Health and Safety Executive guidance
- Hygiene training is given to staff members, where necessary
- Suitable signs are displayed to highlight risk to pregnant women and those vulnerable to disease

Food and drink

- Food and drink is kept out of the animal areas and isn't prepared, served or eaten where the animals eat and live
- Be wary about selling raw, unpasteurised products made onsite
- Provide signage advising visitors not to share their food with animals
- Use plain language and pictures to show visitors how to stay safe and healthy when visiting exhibits
- Visiting groups are given a list of health and safety instructions to adhere to before arrival
- Encourage visitors to wash their hands before eating or drinking
- Keeping participants and staff safe
- Children younger than 5 years, people older than 65, and those with weakened immune systems should take special care around animal exhibits
- Potential dangers are clearly signposted at the entrance and on the company website
- Animals are secure and those displaying aggressive or unpredictable behaviours are kept away from visitors

- Out-of-bounds and staff only areas are secure and clearly marked
- A first aider is on site, as well as an accident book kept
- Fences and other boundaries are maintained regularly
- Staff are appropriately trained on an ongoing basis
- Public liability insurance is made available to schools and other groups carrying out risk assessments prior to their trip
- Contingency plans are in place in case of emergency
- All staff are subject to the necessary background checks
- Public areas are kept free from trip hazards and all dangerous equipment or chemicals stored away safely
- If there is an outbreak of illness linked to the farm, operations should cease immediately whilst an investigation is conducted

Keeping animals safe

- Ensure the animals' needs are catered for and they are properly cared for, including providing fresh bedding, fresh water and food, adequate shelter, rest and healthcare
- Ensure animals are kept in secure premises and aren't vulnerable to predatory animals
- Ensure pets aren't permitted, so as not to cause distress to the animals
- Any interaction with animals and visitors is closely monitored
- When buying animals, ensure all the background information is acquired and that they come from a reputable owner
- Where possible, ask to see the parents and check for pregnancy/previous pregnancies
- Ask for health records of immunisations
- Make sure a vet carries out a full health check on each animals that arrives and regular check-ups are conducted

*This is not an exhaustive list and is intended for guidance only.

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For more help and advice on how to manage risk at your care farm, please contact David Still.

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