

What about biosecurity?

Getting together with other farmers to hold a joint Open Farm Sunday event allows different types of livestock to be brought together at one site and is a great way to offer visitors more of an experience. But it is important to follow biosecurity guidelines to safeguard livestock health and safety.

- Check the current status regarding any movement restrictions for disease control e.g. bluetongue zones and requirements for movement licences. All this information can be found on the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases
- Cattle moving from holdings with a TB testing interval of two years or less will require pre-movement testing within the 60 days prior to movement to the Open Farm Sunday premises.
- Movement of cattle to a holding with a TB testing interval of two years or less from a holding with an interval of greater than two years will require pre-movement testing for the move back home.
- All movements to the Open Farm Sunday premises and return movements will be subjected to a six-day standstill (or whatever standstill is currently in place).
- All movements must be recorded.
- Visiting stock must be kept physically separate from other stock and ideally in areas not normally used for the housing of livestock. Areas used must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, using a Defra approved product (such as FAM 30 or Virkon), before and after they are used.
- On Open Farm Sunday itself, foot dips should be placed so that visitors pass through them between visiting animals that have come from different sites.
- If visitors are able to touch or handle animals, washing facilities must be provided, not only to ensure human safety, but to reduce the risk of cross-infection between groups of stock.

Visitors and biosecurity

Keep them informed – It is well worth explaining biosecurity measures to your visitors as they probably will not realise that they are there to protect the health of the livestock and to ensure human health and safety. Make it part of the event and any demonstration or talk you may hold.

Media savvy – Live animals are the best crowd puller and having them in a pen at an event is often the best way for visitors to get up close, especially if they are from a neighbouring farm. But this may not be best to show their life on the farm, nor convey what happens in different seasons. So consider how you can put the animals in context. If you bring dairy calves, for example, take some photos of milking time, cows grazing etc, and make a display. You could even consider making a video and running it on a laptop, or making recordings and holding a ‘guess the farmyard sound’ game. If you have lambs, bring a fleece visitors can feel. If you decide not to bring live animals, these are also good ways to tell your farming story without the biosecurity risks.

Foot baths – Put out foot-dipping baths. 25 litre drums, cut in half length-ways, make good ones, especially if they are square in cross section. Have a brush available to wash your farm dirt off after the walk. It shows you are responsible to your visitors.

Zoonoses – Be aware of E coli risks and other diseases we can catch from animals. If the event takes place at lambing time, warn female visitors about the risk from abortion causing organisms for those who are pregnant. Similarly, infections are at peak prevalence in calves aged 10 to 20 days.