

What are the main hazards I should be aware of?

A farm can be a hazardous environment, but there are some fairly simple steps you can take to minimise the chances of injury.

Plan the route – Whether it is through the farmyard or a nature trail, try to avoid particularly busy areas, eg moving machinery or areas of clutter and very uneven ground.

Signage and supervision – This is vital in many areas where you have identified a potential hazard. Ensure your helpers are qualified in their area. Brief them before the event starts. Many hosts hold a barbecue the night before and take the opportunity to run down some essential points.

First Aid – You should have a trained first aider at your event and a first aid kit to deal with emergencies.

Hazardous areas – These must be identified and precautions taken to stop visitors entering them. Spray stores, veterinary/medicine stores, workshops, slurry pits should be locked up or cordoned off and visitors kept well away if possible. You should assess the hazards posed by a grain store – deep bins, whether full or empty, should be no-go areas. Temporary signs can be used to reinforce cordons.

Crushing hazards – Heavy items stored in the yard could fall over and crush a child, especially if they could be climbed on. Dual wheels and gates are good examples. They don't have to be removed altogether, just made safe, so lying them flat or tying them securely may suffice.

Temperamental livestock – mature, grazing male animals and females with young are the ones most likely to cause problems. Try to keep them away from the visitor area. Interaction with docile animals is safer, although visitors should not enter animal pens and signage and supervision is important (see later).

Machinery and demonstrations – The demonstration area should be clearly marked out

with visitors kept well away from moving machinery, sheep shearing electrics etc.

Procedures using hazardous substances should not take place during a visit. You can let visitors sit on a tractor, etc, but static machinery should be supervised. Watch for spikes, sharp edges on combines and cultivation equipment and consider if they need to be removed or cordoned off/flagged up.

Tractor and trailer rides – the trailer must have rails and fixed seating – bales will do if strapped to the trailer bed. It must also have independent brakes. You must download and read the HSE guidance *Carriage of passengers on farm trailers*, available through the Open Farm Sunday website.

Farmyard foibles

Some potential hazards to bear in mind:

- Keys left in farm vehicles – static machinery should be supervised or locked up/put out of the way.
- Ladders may encourage visitors to climb and then fall, so should be put away. Fixed ladders should be boarded up.
- Tripping hazards – watch out for wire or hoses across walkways, areas that are slippery when wet and broken/uneven concrete.
- Gates/dual wheels could fall on a child.
- Spray sheds, workshops and slurry pits are strict no-go areas.
- Ponds/open water – ensure your visitors know where these are, through signage, and keep them away or supervise the areas.
- Bale spikes should be laid flat on the ground or removed.
- Straw/fertiliser should be kept away from fire/heat sources (eg BBQ).
- Fuel tanks should be securely locked.