



## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS PATHOGENS**

### **Revised guidance on preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions**

#### **Issue**

The outbreak of *E.coli* O157 at Godstone Farm, Surrey in late summer 2009 was the largest outbreak associated with animal contact recorded in Great Britain.

In October 2009, the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) was asked to provide an interim view of the extant guidance published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for those who open their farms to the public on how to control and prevent infection risks. Then as now, existing guidance on human health and safety at Open Farms is principally to be found in HSE's Agricultural Information Sheet 23(rev) "Avoiding ill health at open farms- Advice to farmers (with teachers' supplement) (AIS23).

Following discussion, members agreed that on current knowledge of the outbreak and of the risks from *E.coli* O157, AIS23 was robust, fit-for-purpose and appeared to work well in the field. They further agreed that it would be sensible to review the guidance following the conclusion of the independent investigation into the Godstone outbreak set up by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) in September 2009.

The report of the independent investigation into the outbreak, the factors that contributed to it and its subsequent handling was published on 15 June 2010 and is available at <http://www.griffininvestigation.org.uk/>

AIS23 has been revised in the light of the conclusions and recommendations of the report. As requested by members, the revised draft (attached) is submitted to the ACDP for further consideration.

## Background

AIS23 was first issued in 1998 in response to a recommendation from the Pennington Group set up by Ministers to inquire into the circumstances leading to the outbreak of infection with *E.coli* O157 in Central Scotland in 1996. Since 1998, it has been accepted as the benchmark of good practice and the basis for enforcement by both the industry and the regulatory bodies (HSE and the Local Authorities).

The guidance assumes that *E.coli* O157 and other microbiological hazards, are always liable to be present on farms i.e. that it is not possible to eliminate the potential for exposure. Focusing on controlling the risk, AIS23 has been revised periodically; most recently in June 2009.

In September 2009, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) set up an independent investigation into the Godstone Farm outbreak, the factors that contributed to it and its subsequent handling. Chaired by Professor George Griffin, Professor of Infectious Diseases and Medicine at St George's, University of London, a practising infectious diseases clinician and Chair of the ACDP, the Independent Investigation Committee gathered evidence between November 2009 and February 2010 and published its report on 15 June 2010. The report is available at <http://www.griffininvestigation.org.uk/>

Although the committee was unable to identify the source of the outbreak, it made 43 recommendations including recommendation 24, which states that "The content of all existing guidance touching on human health and safety at Open Farms needs to be reviewed, improved and clarified where necessary."

The responsibility for considering, prioritising and taking forward the committee's recommendations was delegated by the HPA Board to a Godstone Multi-agency Implementation Committee (GMAIC), comprising members from:

- the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
- the Department of Health
- the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- the HPA
- HSE
- Local Government Regulation

- industry representative bodies such as the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the National Farm Attraction Network (NFAN); and
- the charitable organisation the Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome Help (HUSH) representing the public interest.

The review of AIS23, led by HSE, has been carried out under the auspices of the GMAIC. Although the content of the revised draft is consistent with the existing guidance and will be familiar to members the main changes include:

- A change of title. By changing the focus from open farms to the more generic prevention or control of ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions it is hoped to minimise confusion as to the application and scope of the guidance.
- Greater clarity as to the application and legal status of the guidance
- Additional reference to *Cryptosporidium parvum*.
- An amended layout including the use of text boxes to summarise key information
- The use of photographs to demonstrate good practice (examples of which are attached at Annex 1)
- Revised guidance on the application of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) and on the assessment and control of risk
- Revised guidance on the layout of premises and public access including enhanced guidance on double fencing
- Revised guidance on contact with animals and the segregation of animal contact and non-contact areas including the prevention of contact from faecal material and run-off
- Revised guidance on washing facilities
- Revised guidance on visitor information and signage
- Revised guidance on livestock management; and
- New guidance on play areas and cleaning footwear, pushchairs, wheelchairs etc.

The revised draft has been the subject of a wide consultation exercise (see Annex 2). Subject to members' comments, HSE proposes to publish the revised guidance before the end of March 2011 i.e. in advance of the commencement of the visitor farm attractions' spring/summer seasons.

Key duty holder organisations including NFAN; the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens; Farming and Countryside Education; and the NFU have offered to endorse and promote the revised guidance through a joint press release.

Additionally, under the auspices of the Access to Farms partnership and supported by HSE, these duty holder organisations are collaborating in the development of an industry code of practice.

Following further consultation with the Department for Education, the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government:

- minor revisions have also been made to the supplement to AIS23; and
- the title to the supplement has been changed to clarify that its scope extends beyond teachers, to include others who organise educational/ recreational visits for children.

**Action**

Members are asked to consider and comment on the changes to AIS23 in the context of the conclusions and recommendations of the Griffin Investigation Committee's Review of the major outbreak of *E.coli* O157 in Surrey, 2009.

**Secretariat**

**Date: 25 January 2011**

**ANNEX 1**

**PHOTOGRAPHS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSION IN AIS23**

Examples of photographs illustrating good practice which may either be included in AIS23 or be placed on the HSE website.

Please note better quality photographs (including removing attraction names) will be in the final version.

**Enclosure preventing bedding and run-off contaminating walkway**



**Examples of remote animal feeding**



**Examples of double fencing including electric double fencing across gateways**



**Examples of handwashing facilities**





Examples of signage





## ANNEX 2

## LIST OF CONSULTEES

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (HGCA Division)  
 Agricultural Industries Confederation  
 Association of Show and Agricultural Organisations  
 Bayer CropScience Ltd  
 Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council  
 British Crop Production Council  
 British Pig Executive (BPEX)  
 British Wool Marketing Board  
 Brogdale Collections  
 Country Landowners Association  
 Church Mission Society UK  
 Country Trust  
 Countryside Foundation for Education  
 DairyCo  
 Defra
 

- Animal Health (AH)
- Environmental Land Management Division
- VLA

 Department for Education  
 Department of Health (DH)  
 Devon County Agricultural Association  
 Driffield Agricultural Society  
 East of England Agricultural Society  
 Elm Farm Research Centre  
 Ernest Cook Trust  
 FarmLink, Alvis Bros  
 Farms for City Children  
 FEAST Midlands Ltd  
 Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens (FACE)  
 Farmers' Union of Wales,  
 Glendale Agricultural Society  
 Health Protection Agency (HPA)  
 Health Protection Scotland (HPS)  
 Heart of England Conference & Events Centre  
 HSE  
 Institute of Animal Health  
 Kent County Agricultural Society  
 Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence (Landex)  
 Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)  
 Lincolnshire Agricultural Society  
 Local Government Regulation  
 Local Authorities in England, Scotland and Wales (various)  
 Mole Avon Trading Ltd  
 National Non Food Crop Centre  
 National Farmers Retail and Markets Association  
 National Office of Animal Health (NOAH)  
 National Sheep Association  
 Natural England

Newbury & District Agricultural Society  
NFAN  
NFU  
NFU Mutual Charitable Trust  
National Federation of Young Farmers clubs (NFYFC)  
Northmoor Trust  
Organic Centre Wales  
Potash Development Association  
Royal Agricultural Society of England  
Royal Bath & West of England Agricultural Society  
Royal Cornwall Agricultural Association  
Royal Highland Education Trust  
Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association  
RSPB  
Samworth Brothers Holdings Ltd  
Scottish Agricultural Colleges  
Scottish Government  
Soil Association  
South of England Agricultural Society  
STC Research Foundation  
Surrey County Agricultural Society  
Syngenta  
The Cooperative Farms  
The Potato Council  
Three Counties Agricultural Society  
Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust  
UK Agriculture  
Waitrose  
Warwickshire Rural Community Council  
Welsh Assembly Government  
West Sussex Countryside Studies Trust  
Westmorland County Agricultural Society  
Winfresh (UK) Ltd  
Worshipful Company of Farmers  
Yorkshire Agricultural Society  
Yorkshire Museum of Famine  
Zoo Forum

Of the above:

- NFAN circulated the draft to ~150 members
- FACE circulated the draft to ~120 members
- LGR circulated the draft to LAs in Great Britain and posted it on their communities page
- The DH, HPA, HPS, AH and VLA circulated the draft internally
- HPS circulated the draft widely within the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland and arranged for circulation amongst local authorities in Scotland.