

Get on my land!

Farm visit activity pack



Steering cards: notes



Encourage children to look at the hedgerows and trees, introduce ideas about farming cycles and whether the fields might have different crops/animals in them.

Key Stage 2+

Encourage children to observe the landscape and respond to the 'sense of place'. Try to assess what characteristics in the landscape – eg hedgerows, weather, architectural styles, flora and fauna – make this landscape different from others, such as desert, rain forest etc.

10,000 years ago: unmanaged and forested after the last ice age. 100 years ago: encourage children to think about a landscape with fewer machines, more horses and more people. 100 years' time: develop ideas about managing land, where farming is going (eg more organic?).

This encourages children to study the landscape and reflect, through expressing their feelings, and their opinions on the view.

This is an opportunity to introduce some of the hidden ways in which your farm has improved the landscape. Ask the children if managing the landscape organically has improved or damaged the land / environment.

Key Stages 1 and 2

This is an opportunity to try to summarise their responses to the variety of feelings and experiences they have had stimulated from the surrounding landscape.

Encourage children to look at detail in the landscape around them with the opportunity to discover the diversity of both the natural and non-natural world.

This is an opportunity to develop further a 'sense of place' by listening to the landscape in detail. This is a way of introducing the rich biodiverse landscape of an organic farm and comparing it with other landscapes they know.

This intends to illustrate the diversity of opportunity for animals in a well-managed organic landscape.

Get on my land!



Introduction

What I hear, I forget.

What I see, I remember.

What I do, I understand.

Confucius

This folder is for farmers who want to encourage schools to visit their farms, so that children can find out more about organic farming.

We've put this material together with the help of farmers who already welcome school groups to their farms. These farmers know from experience how challenging and rewarding these young visitors can be, and have a wealth of experience to draw on.

Organic farms offer an ideal 'outdoor classroom', packed with learning opportunities. Most have a mixture of crops and livestock, and pupils and teachers alike will find the visit satisfying and fulfilling.

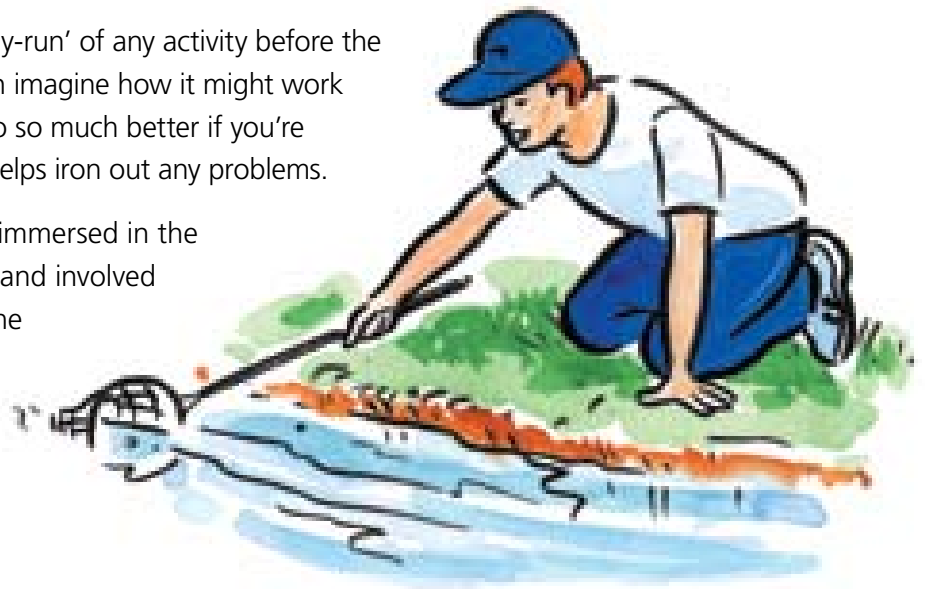
Children love visiting farms. There's so much to do, and they often get very excited. So it's a good idea to be clear about what you and they hope to achieve, and how it fits in to the National Curriculum. That way, everyone will get the most out of the visit.

The pack is organised around the following themes:

1. Where are we? Get to know the farm.
2. Field to fork. How farms produce our food.
3. What is soil? Find out why it's so important.
4. Animal welfare. Think about animal rights and wrongs.
5. Biodiversity. Why work with nature?
6. Practical tasks. Get stuck in to some fun farm activities.
7. Sensory activities. Tune into nature.

You should always do a 'dry-run' of any activity before the school turns up, so you can imagine how it might work with a school group. It'll go so much better if you're confident yourself, and it helps iron out any problems.

Children need to become immersed in the farm. The more hands-on and involved you can make their visit, the more they will get out of the experience.



Get on my land! Introduction

Pick the topics that work best for you and your farm. Try to cover the key issues around organic farming. For maximum impact, try to address these topics in context. Let the children watch the chickens while you talk about animal welfare, for example. Or get them to think about biodiversity as they poke about in a hedge.

If you are new to running farm visits with schools you may find those activities labelled 'Level 1' a good place to start. Consider levels two to three as your confidence grows.

Visual images also help children remember facts. For example:

- This tank holds 7,000 litres. That is about how much milk each of our cows produces every year (children won't remember 7,000, but they will remember the size of the tank).
- Guess how much that cow weighs? About 20 of you! (If Key Stage 2 children.)

Remember: Children remember only 20 per cent of what they are told, but 80 per cent of what they do. So make their visit as hands-on and fun as possible.

Get on my land!



An outline plan for a school visit

The key to a successful visit is flexibility. Even the best-laid plans could be affected by unforeseen circumstances. For example:

- the bus is late;
- there are more – or fewer – children than you expected;
- some have forgotten their wellies, or aren't dressed warmly enough;
- there's a downpour.

No matter what happens, the children will be enthusiastic and excited. Work with the accompanying adults to make sure that everything runs smoothly, especially if you need to change your plans at the last minute.

If time runs out, for example, you may have to skip an activity. Always make lunch earlier, not later, because small children can't concentrate when they're hungry.

Before the visit

Try to establish a rapport with the teacher and adults before the visit. This makes it easier for them to help you on the day. At least one member of staff should visit the farm to carry out the pre-visit and do a risk assessment.

Discuss your ideas with the school. The teachers may like to you cover specific themes, depending on what the children are studying at school. You may want to show them these activities, as they may want to lead them on the day.

Ask whether there are any allergies, special conditions, or relevant medication you need to know about.

Explain to the adults that toilet-breaks and washing hands can take a long time, and that it would great if they could all help the children.

Here are two sample tours to give you some ideas. The first is a typical talk, with a tour. The second incorporates 'round robin' activities.



Example outline timetables

Example 1: Typical talk and tour

9.00am

Check the weather forecast. Plan an alternative indoor activity in case it rains. This could be to look at animals, talk about the history of the farm, let the children handle artefacts, or explore with them the difference between organic and conventional farming.

Make sure that everyone working on the farm knows about the visit. They must remember to put handbrakes on and take the keys out of any stationary vehicles. Be aware of any visiting vehicles (a milk tanker, for example) – some people drive too fast on farms.

Prepare a rucksack with a first-aid kit, a towel and a fully charged mobile phone. Walk the routes yourself.

10.00am

Meet the coach and take staff and children to a safe, sheltered gathering space. Ideally, there should be chairs or bales to sit on. Tell the coach driver where to park and what time you expect the children to return to the coach (or what time the coach should return to the farm).

Always check times with the coach drivers. If it took longer to get to the farm than they'd expected, they may want to leave a bit earlier than originally planned. Help the drivers by insisting that children store their boots / old trainers in plastic bags. And, if the drivers are on the farm at lunchtime, offer them a cup of tea.

10.10am

Introductory talk.

This is the most important conversation of the day for two reasons: First, you form a relationship with the children; second, you make it clear what you expect in terms of behaviour, and you explain about health and safety.

The talk should include:

- *Welcome to farm. My name is It is so good to see so many children from school.*
- The group will enjoy it if you can tell a brief anecdote about the farm or its history.
- Then explain that what you are about to say are the most important words they'll hear all day. They should listen carefully, because what they're going to hear will keep them safe and well. Ask them for their full attention, just for five minutes.

Get on my land! An outline plan for a school visit



- Tell the children about the adults they will meet, how they should behave near animals, around machinery, in buildings and when walking from one area of the farm to another.
- Point out any areas of the farm they need to be aware of, such as slurry pits and electric fencing. Explain how to use gates and stiles.
- Outline the timetable for the day. Point out the toilets and hand-washing facilities. Let the children know when and where they will eat lunch. Emphasise that they must wash their hands after touching any animal, and that they must never put their fingers in their mouths before washing them carefully.
- Finish by asking the children if there is anything that you have said that they do not understand.



You can find out more on health and safety from [HSE Agriculture Information Sheet No 23](#) and [HSE Information Sheet AIS23 Supplement](#). This is available from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais23.pdf

As you set off, ask children always to walk (not run) behind you, never in front. On the tour, point out health and safety risks as they occur (for example, stiles and gates).

10.30am

Toilet break, wash hands and have a snack. It is often easier to have this break just after the introductory talk, to save time.

10.50am

Activity 1: Farm Tour. As you walk from place to place, keep their interest with sensory and stimulating activities such as 'farm-aroma', 'rainbow colours' and 'steering cards'.

12.15am

Toilet break, wash hands and then lunch. Some children eat very fast, others very slowly.

Towards the end of the lunch break, introduce the idea of where their lunch food came from. Use the activity 'We are what we eat'. You could ask the children to sort out waste, as a way of learning about compost, recycling and packaging.

1.00pm

Activity 3. Use the remaining hour for a longer activity such as the 'secret of soil'.

2.00pm

Toilet, wash wellies, take wellies off, then wash hands. Most schools have to be back by 3.00pm for school buses and to meet parents.

Get on my land! An outline plan for a school visit

Example 2: Round robin activities

For these, divide the children into three groups. The groups take it in turns to have a go at one of three activities, such as grinding wheat, making a scarecrow or building an organic sculpture.

If you do this, the timings will need to be different.

Each activity needs to take 45 to 60 minutes, depending on how long it will take for the children to finish one and walk to the next.

10.10am

Introductory talk, toilet break, wash hands and snack.

10.50am

The children will need to orientate themselves. Take them on a short (no more than 40 minutes) tour of the farm. You could also show them where the different activities will take place, and briefly explain to the adults where the resources / tools are and how the space is set up.

11.30am

Round robin 1.

12.05pm

Lunch: toilet break, wash hands and have lunch.

12.45pm

Round robin 2.

1.20pm

Round robin 3.

1.55pm

Toilet, wash hands and go home.



1. Where are we? Get to know the farm

Steering cards



Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 2

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation

Photocopy the steering cards in this pack, or prepare your own. You could get them laminated so they can be used more than once.

Resources needed

Six sets of steering cards for a group of 30 children (see examples at back) with thought-provoking questions already written on.

Description of the activity

At some point on the tour, stop and ask the children to form a circle. Hand out the steering cards, one between three children or so. Ask them quietly to discuss the topic on the card.

Examples:

- How might the view in front of you have looked 10,000 years ago? 100 years ago? And what might it look like in 100 years' time?
- Suggest two ways in which people have improved this landscape, and two ways in which people have damaged the landscape.

After about a minute, ask them to come together again to feedback their thoughts.

Their answers could form the basis for a discussion or philosophical enquiry about the countryside or farming.

Extensions

Get the children to construct a timeline. They could look at the past (impacts of enclosures, Dutch elm disease etc), the present (a land-use map, new hedge-planting) and future management (new plans for crops and livestock).

Learning outcome

Encourage an awareness of biodiversity and develop a sense of place. Be able to listen and observe.



2. Field to fork: How farms produce our food

What's for breakfast?

Suitable for: Mixed farm

Farmer teaching experience: Level 1

Time: 1–1.5 hours

Preparation

None. This is a useful thing to do at the start of visit the visit, or as an outline structure for the tour.

Resources needed

Examples of food that comes from a farm: eggs, bottles of milk etc.

Description of the activity

This activity will work best with younger children aged four to seven.

1. Say to the children, "I have been busy all morning, and I haven't had my breakfast yet. Can you help me decide what I should have for my breakfast?"
2. Children will say at least: egg, sausage, bacon, bread, milk, cornflakes etc.
3. Where am I going to get my egg from?
4. Visit the chickens.
5. Feed the hens, talk about hens, collect some eggs. Explain that hens like to be outside, scratching, talking and having dust-baths.
6. Where am I going to get my bacon and sausage from?
7. Visit the pigs.
8. Point out the pigs' noses, explain that pigs like to root, that they get rid of weeds. Look at their tails. Ask the children why some pigs have curlier tails than others. Some people say it's a sign of happiness! Ask the children whether pigs are smelly or dirty?
9. Where am I going to get my bread from? What is it made of?
10. Visit a wheat field. Show the children the stalks and the ears. What is each part used for? If the plants are still growing, make sure you have a few ears from last season to show the children.
11. If you have a hand mill, show them how it works. When do we harvest?
12. Where am I going to get my milk from?



Get on my land! Field to fork

13. Visit the cows. Who do the cows produce milk for? Which part of the cow produces milk? What else do we do with milk apart from drink it? (yoghurt, cheese, butter etc).

This is an opportunity to get them to think about the journey that food makes from the field to the plate. You could discuss all the other jobs involved on this journey. If the children mention sugar, tea and coffee, use the opportunity to ask them why we can't grow these things in the UK. Explain that there are other farms similar to yours in different parts of the world where the weather is better for growing tea, coffee and sugar. If the teacher agrees, you could also talk about food miles and fair trade.

Learning outcome

Food journeys.

Pre-visit activity in school

Discuss and research different farm enterprises.

We are what we eat

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 2

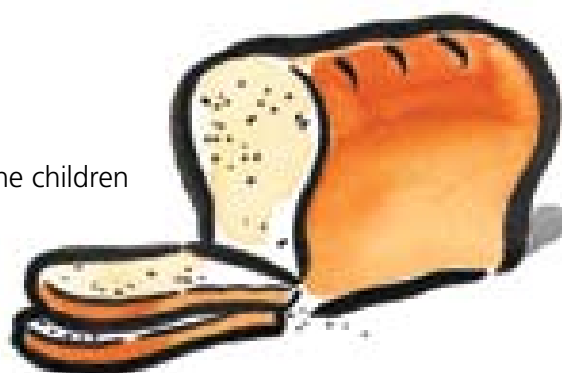
Time: 15 minutes

Preparation

It's best to do this activity just after lunch, while the children have still got their lunch boxes.

Resources needed

Children's lunch boxes.



Description of the activity

The idea is for the children to make links between foods they are familiar with and farms.

Ask the children what they had in their lunch boxes. If they've got any empty packets, ask them to read the ingredients.

Ask them whether they can relate any of the ingredients to the farm. Which ingredients does this farm produce?

After feedback, show them pictures of an ear of wheat, an ear of oats, a lamb and a cow (pictures in appendix).

Then ask the children to sort the items from their lunch boxes into four separate piles: wheat, oats, dairy and meat.

Explain that all these items come from a farm. Ask them to think of other products that also come from farms.

Extensions

Have various bits of packaging ready yourself (such as yoghurt pots, biscuit wrappers and crisp packets), just in case the children don't have enough. Recycling: can they separate the packaging into paper, glass, metal?

You can also look at food waste and talk about making compost. This is also another opportunity to talk food production around the world, food miles, buying local and fair trade. You could encourage schools to come prepared with a waste-free lunch. Or you could get the children to separate and weigh their waste and compare the results to a national average.

Or you could look at different egg boxes and the labelling, and compare caged, barn, free-range and organic eggs. This can really make children think about choices.

Learning outcome

That all food comes, in some form, from a farm.

Get on my land! Field to fork

Pre-visit activity in school

Journeys food makes from plough to plate.

3. What is soil? Find out why it's so important

The secret of soil

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 3

Time: 30–40 minutes

Preparation

Gather soil samples.

Make sure that the children will be able to access a compost heap, log-pile or old carpet.

Resources needed

- Spades/trowels, gloves;
- Soil sample (about a tablespoon for each child);
- A transparent plastic container (eg the cut-off bottom of an empty two-litre drinks bottle), small stones / pebbles, a cup of water, a watch, a live worm (or small plastic bugs), some leaves;
- Samples of peat and sand (in a bucket or small sealed plastic bags), and a teaspoon.



Description of the activity

1. Show the group a teaspoon of soil and ask them to guess how many micro-organisms live in it. (Answer: 6 billion – as many as there are people in the world.)
2. Take the group to a field that will be easy to dig.
3. Divide the children between the adults present.
4. Say that you need help to discover the 'secret of soil'.
5. In small groups, with one spade / trowel between them, ask each group to dig a sample about the size of a golf ball. Or give out lumps of soil that you dug up before.
6. Ask the group to try to describe what soil is made of.
7. As the children give you the following answers, add them to the transparent plastic container: leaves (organic matter), stones / rocks, water and minibeasts / bacteria. Ask one of the children to mix it around.
8. Show the mixed contents to the class and ask, "Does that look like soil? Why not? What's missing?"

Get on my land! What is soil?

9. Introduce the idea of time. Add the watch and explain that all the ingredients for soil are, indeed, in the pot, but that it takes ages for soil to form. Discuss why this means that it is so important to look after soil.
10. Ask the group whether all soil is the same. Ask them where they might find different kinds of soil. Ask them why they think the soil is different in different places.

Extension activity

Extension 1: Types of soil

Hand out samples of peat and sand. Ask the children what ingredient is missing. (Answer: the sand doesn't have any leaves, and the peat doesn't have rock.)

With the peat, ask the children how leaves break down to look like soil. Introduce the ideas of mixers and rotters. Some mini-beasts mix the soil and others break down organic matter. You could use soil tubes and get the children to shake the soil up in water and let it settle to see its components. Plastic bottles will do, too.

Extension 2: Compost

If you've got a compost heap, rotten logs, leaf-mould or old carpet, take the group to see the rotters and mixers in action. Or see the separate sheet for designing a suitable compost heap for children. Talk about the millions of invisible micro-organisms working in the compost heap and in the soil, and why they are so important to an organic farmer.

Ask why organic matter is important for the soil. What needs soil to grow? What do plants get from the soil?

You could introduce the idea of the organic cycles and waste reduction. Or talk about how a healthy, well-balanced soil produces healthy, well-balanced crops and food.

Extension 3: Worm count

Split the children into groups of three to five, give them trowels or small spades, and get them to dig out a square of soil about 50 x 50 cm and 10 to 20 cm deep. Then ask them to finger through the soil and count the worms. Draw their attention to the whole field (or to the whole farm) – and ask them to estimate how many worms there are. It's maths with a little awe and wonder!

Learning outcome

How healthy soil develops. The relationship between healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy animals and healthy people. Reducing waste. Recycling.

Pre-visit activity in school

Mineral and nutrient cycles and soil.



4. Animal welfare

Think about animal rights and wrongs

How much space?

Suitable for: Livestock farm

Farmer teaching experience: Level 1

Time: 10–15 minutes

Preparation

Use string to mark out three areas on the ground (or use portable electric fencing posts). Make one about 1 metre square, a second area about 3 metres square, and a third 5 metres square.



Resources needed

String and electric fence posts.

Description of the activity

1. Ask the children: What are the basic things that people need to stay alive and have a good quality of life? (Answers: water, shelter, food, exercise, happiness, freedom ... there will also be many more!)
2. Ask: What are the basic things that farm animals need to stay alive and have a good quality of life?
3. Once the children have supplied many different answers, highlight the similarities between the basic needs of both humans and animals.
4. Ask four children to stand in the smallest square. Tell them to imagine that they are pigs, cows or chickens (pick an animal that's on your farm).
5. Ask them how they feel? (Answers: cramped, uncomfortable, irritable, frustrated etc.)
6. Pick four more children and ask them to stand in the middle-sized square. Tell them to imagine they're the same animals.
7. Ask them how they feel? (Answers: fine, good, OK, more room.)
8. Then get a final four children to stand in the largest, as the same animals.
9. Ask them how they feel? (Answers: great, free, roomy, happy.)
10. Ask the first group which square they would be happiest living in.
11. Suggest that the boxes illustrate three different types of farming practice: battery/intensive, conventional and organic. Which is which?

Get on my land! Animal welfare

12. Ask them why a food producer or farmer would want to keep animals in such small spaces?
13. Who suffers? How much space would that farmer need for 100 animals? (Answer: not very much.)
14. Then ask them why someone would want to keep animals in larger spaces?
15. Who suffers? How much space would that farmer need for 100 animals? (Answer: lots.)
16. On which type of farm would the animals get a better quality of life?
17. Ask the children to think about what five basic things an animal needs for a fair, happy and healthy life.

The following points are based on the Soil Association's organic standards and may be a useful reference. Animals should:

- Always have free-range access to pasture
- Have natural light and ventilation when housed
- Have enough space to move around
- Be fed a natural diet and clean water
- Be allowed to grow at a natural rate
- Have comfortable bedding
- To be given medicine only when they need it, and not 'routinely'.

Remember that some children may themselves live on farms. So be sensitive when discussing these topics.

Extensions

Children love playing detective, so you could run this activity as an 'inspection' and ask the children to gather clues about the animals' quality of life as they tour the farm.

Learning outcome

Animal husbandry and high animal-welfare standards.

Pre-visit activity in school

RSPCA website and activities: www.rspca.org.uk

Further resources (if required)

Story of Hetty and Harriet by Graham Oakley. A tale about two chickens who escape from a battery chicken farm to a traditional family farm. ISBN 0333323734. (Available from websites such as Amazon.co.uk)

5. Biodiversity: Why work with nature?

Hedgerow homes, hideaways and habitats

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 2

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation

Measure out a 100-metre length of hedge.

Resources needed

Bug boxes, sweep nets (see resource list), spoons and one piece of white cloth per group, identification charts.

Description of the activity

1. Measure or pace out a 100-metre length along a hedge.
2. Ask the children to count the number of different plant species they can see in it. They could collect as many different types of leaves growing in the hedge and then put them in order of shape, pattern, size, colour etc, then count them.
3. If it is an ancient hedge, you can work out how old it is from the number of species living in it: each one equals 100 years. So if you find six species of tree, the hedge is 600 years old.
4. Ask the children to name as many events they can think of that might have happened during the hedge's lifetime.
5. Introduce the idea that each leaf of each tree means food for some insect or bug. For wildlife, then, the hedgerow is like a larder. The more different types of plants, the more different insects can get their dinner from it.



Get on my land! Biodiversity

6. Tell the children that they are going to become bug detectives. Their first job is to see how many different types of bugs they can find in the hedgerow.
7. Divide the group between the adults present. Give each adult a white piece of cloth – an old pillow case is ideal. Distribute sweep nets, bug boxes and spoons.
8. Ask the adults to space their groups along a section of hedge. Put the cloth on the ground under or as close to the hedge as possible. Then shake the branches over the cloth. With one or two vigorous shakes, a range of bugs should end up on the white cloth. The children can then suck them up into the pooters or collect them with a spoon and put them in bug boxes.
9. Get the adults to talk to the children about what the bugs look like, why they've got the colours they have, and how they move. Give the children identification charts so they can try to name the bugs.
10. At the end, ask the children to describe the different bugs they collected. Ask which animals they think may eat the bugs, to introduce the idea of food chains. Discuss the importance of hedges as a habitat for many animals.

NB For hygiene, wash and disinfect the pooters between children.

Extensions

Bug hunt: make a bug nest – see additional sheet.

Make bugs out of junk materials / natural materials; sketch a bug; play a food-chain game; make a food-chain mobile.

Learning outcome

Biodiversity.

Pre-visit activity in school

Looking at habitats and food chains.

6. Practical tasks: Getting stuck into some fun farm activities

Practical farm tasks

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 2

Time: 20-45 minutes per task,
1–1.5 hours for all activities.

Preparation

Divide the school party into smaller groups, depending on how many activities you've got. Three or four is about right. At least one adult should join each group. Plan for each activity to last about 20–45 minutes.

The success of these activities depends the clarity of the instruction cards and on how well you've prepared the tools and equipment beforehand.

Resources needed

Appropriate tools and equipment. For example, for vegetable harvesting, weeding and sowing, you will need small tools and pots etc.

Description of the activity

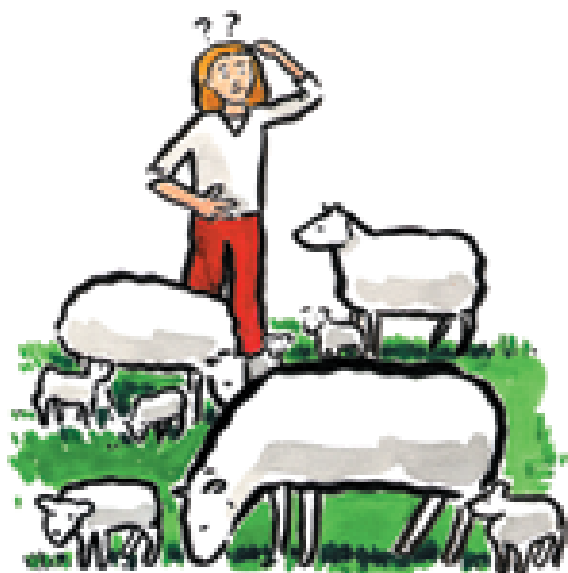
Though they take longer to prepare, these practical activities are worth it because the children get so involved and give great feedback. And they tend to remember such hands-on and practical jobs for a long time, perhaps for ever.

Horticulture: Get the children to harvest vegetables. They love trying to guess what's growing underneath the leaves. You could also get them to see who pulls the biggest carrot, or gather stuff for their own vegetable box.

At different times of year, children will enjoy (and are very good at) sowing seeds, and they love weeding.

If it's possible, let the children cook what they've dug up. If not, give them some recipes to take home with their vegetable boxes.

Feeding, bedding and mucking out: From chickens to pigs, children love feeding animals, mucking out sleeping areas and spreading fresh straw. It's one of the best ways to engage them on the farm. They'll never forget sweeping yards or sweeping down the milking parlour.



Get on my land! Practical tasks

Other jobs: You could ask the children to help move and stack things, collect and grade eggs, move an electric fence, take tree guards off, spread muck on vegetable beds, build willow fences, or clean up an area. Each activity will be different for each farm. It's vital, though, that you introduce and explain each job carefully, and make your expectations clear.

The success and safety of these stimulating, 'hands-on' activities depends on you planning them carefully with the visiting teachers or adults before the visit.

1. Suggest tasks and briefly describe the supervision needed. Show the adults where the activity will take place. Ask who will supervise each activity. It's best for one adult to get familiar with and stick to one activity.
2. You need to provide a health and safety checklist for each activity, because it may be the adults, not you, who end up briefing the children.

General briefing for group. As well as the introductory talk (See 'An outline plan for a school visit'), make sure you emphasise specific health and safety risks regarding tools, building or locations etc. If the group is particularly lively, it may be appropriate to tell them that those who don't concentrate may be asked to sit out the activity.

NB Supervision and preparation are key here. You need to invest a lot of your time. Groups not supervised directly need to be in a safe place. Never underestimate how long it takes to move children and how much help teachers and other adult helpers may need to run activities they themselves may never have done before.

Learning outcome

That both plants and animals need a lot of attention and care, and that farmers need a range of skills to run a farm successfully.

Pre-visit activity in school

Perhaps look at a plan of the farm and think about what each area might be used for.

Wheat grinding

Suitable for: Arable farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 2

Time: 20–30 minutes

Preparation

Make sure that the hand mill and other equipment is clean, that you've got enough grains handy, along with containers for water, and clean tables to work on (or you could use plastic or paper sheets).

Resources needed

Wheat (or other cereal) for grinding, hand mill, sieve, water, containers to hold ground wheat, small scoops and mixing bowls. Some sample ears of wheat.

Description of the activity

1. Divide the group into two.
2. While the first group grinds wheat, the second can do something else (make a scarecrow, for example).
3. Hold up some wheat. Ask whether anybody knows the plant's name.
4. Ask what the top part and bottom part of the plant are called. How do we use these different parts of the plant?
5. Hand out some ears of wheat and explain the process of threshing. Demonstrate this. If you've got enough wheat, let the children have a go.
6. Gather some of the threshed wheat and explain how the husks are removed by winnowing. Throw the corn and husks into the air and allow the wind to blow the husks away.
7. Then get the children to take turns adding a few scoopfuls of grain into the hand mill and turning the handle to grind the wheat into flour. If they don't handle the grains then the flour will be fine for cooking with.
8. Collect the ground flour. Sieve it to remove the coarse bits.
9. You can stop the activity here and give them little bags of flour to take away. Or you can add water to show how flour turns into dough.



Extensions

You can do this again with other grains such as oats and barley.

Use the flour to make pitta breads back at school.

Get on my land! Practical tasks

Pitta bread recipe

- 450 g / 1 lb white bread flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 10 g sachet (or 3 teaspoons) instant yeast or ¼ oz / 8 g active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Sift the flour and salt. Combine the yeast, sugar and 60 ml / ¼ cup lukewarm water in a cup and leave it for five minutes until it starts to froth. Then add this mixture, along with another 250 ml / 1 cup of lukewarm water, to the flour. Add the olive oil. Mix to form a dough.

Knead on a floured surface for about 10 minutes until it is smooth, springy and elastic. Put the dough back into the bowl, cover with a damp cloth or put the whole bowl into a plastic bag. Leave to rise in a warm place for 1½ to 2 hours until it has doubled in size.

Punch the air out of the dough and knead briefly, then divide the dough into 12 pieces. Roll each one out to a ¾ cm / ¼ inch thick round and put on a floured baking tray. Then cover the tray and leave to rise again for another 45 minutes.

Preheat your oven to its highest temperature – about 220°C / 450°F if it will get that hot. Put a baking sheet tray in the middle of your oven to heat. Once the dough has risen, put one or two pitta breads onto the griddle and return to oven to cook for 2½ to 3 minutes until they have puffed up.

Learning outcome

Food journeys and changing states.

Pre-visit activity in school

Research grains and flour.

7. Sensory activities

Tune into nature ('farm-aroma')

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 1

Time: 10 minutes

Preparation

This is a good way to get the children to 'smell' your farm. Collect used plastic cups, yoghurt pots or small margarine tubs.

Resources needed

Plastic cups, yoghurt pots or small margarine containers, enough for one between two children. An open space.



Description of the activity

1. Ask the children and adults to stand in a circle. Then ask them to take a sniff. Ask them to try to describe the smell. They'll find this tricky and may say "countryside, grass, mud," etc.
2. Then explain that you want to invent the best-smelling cocktail from this farm, and that you need their help. Hand out a container and ask them to go and collect really smelly things such as flowers, grass, leaves and mud and add them to their pots.
3. When they've done that, ask them to form a circle and pass the smelly cocktails round the circle for everyone to sniff.
4. Discuss the range of different, sometimes subtle, smells that attract different bugs and animals. Explain that humans often find these difficult to pick up individually as there are so many other interfering smells.
5. Tip the contents on the ground after the activity.

Extensions

Children could try to make their own 'natural perfume' by adding a little water to flower petals or grass.

You could also look at scent and colour in the context of pollination.

Learning outcome

Using the five senses.

Pre-visit activity in school

Why plants produce scents.

Creative scarecrows

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 2

Time: 20–30 minutes

Preparation

Make sure you've got enough pre-made scarecrow crosses for there to be one for every four or five children (see resource sheet).

Resources needed

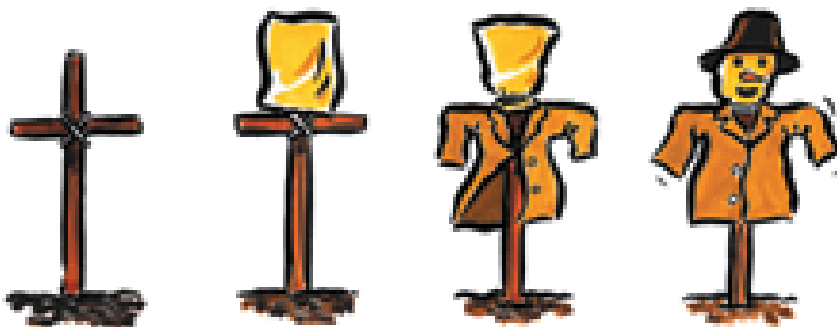
- For each scarecrow, you need two wooden poles (such as hazel), one 6 ft, one 4 ft wooden pole, about 1½ inches (3–4 cms) wide. Tie the short pole to the long pole high enough to make a cross for the arms.
- Old clothes and pillow cases from a charity shop.
- Straw and string.

Description of the activity

1. Divide the group into two.
2. While the first makes scarecrows, the second can do something else, such as wheat-grinding.
3. Show or tell them how to do this.
4. Make a head by stuffing the pillow case full of straw and tying it on the top of the cross. Then tie up the trouser ankles and stuff the legs with straw. Like braces, use long pieces of string to attach these over the top of the arms pole. Tie the trousers at waist height to the upright pole.
5. Choose a top, put it on the scarecrow, and then stuff it with straw.
6. Add any hats, wellington boots. Draw the face on at the end.

Learning outcome

Creative team work and fun activity.



Rainbow colours

Suitable for: All farms

Farmer teaching experience: Level 1

Time: 20 minutes

Preparation

Either you or the teacher should prepare the collecting cards before the visit. Put each child's name on the back.

Resources needed

You need one strip of white card 15 cm by 6 cm (6 inches x 2.5 inches) with two strips of double-sided sticky tape for each child, or for each pair of children.

Description of the activities

1. Do this activity near an accessible hedge or small woodland / copse. Ask the children how many different colours they can see in the hedge.
2. Hand out the collecting cards. Then ask the group to pick different coloured leaves and then stick them onto the strip like the colours in a rainbow.

Extensions

1. Split the children between the adults. Get each group first to collect a range of coloured leaves, different shaped leaves, feathers, sticks and other natural and interesting materials. Then ask them to make a 2D organic picture / sculpture on the ground or even on concrete from the materials they have collected. It helps if the children have a focus for their sculpture – for example, something they have discovered on their visit to the farm.
2. You could cut out the shape of an artist's palette, and children can either stick colours on to the palette or rub the colours on (soil and dandelion flowers are very good for this).
3. You could also hand out colour squares from paint charts and ask the children to find something in the natural world that matches.

NB Always say that they can't use living animals, and make sure they don't pick rare flowers.

Learning outcome

Understanding variety in nature and using it creatively.

Pre-visit activity in school

Research the organic sculptor Andy Goldsworthy.



Health and safety

The safety of your visitors should be your paramount concern. Never allow or condone reckless behaviour. Do not assume that visitors know anything about any of the hazards on your farm. Working from that assumption, it is your responsibility to either eliminate hazards or reduce them by cautioning your visitors.

Check with your insurance company that your policy includes sufficient public **liability cover**. You must comply with health and safety requirements.

You should have to hand the contact details of local doctors and the nearest hospital with an Accident and Emergency Department, including maps or directions to the surgeries and hospitals. Consider access for the emergency services.

Supervision is very important where children are concerned.

If you intend to host children, you and your staff must have read and be familiar with the Health and Safety Executive's Information Sheet ***Avoiding ill health on open farms – Advice to farmers (with teachers' supplement)***. This outlines the legal duties of those concerned. It also gives useful safety guidelines for farmers and their employees.

If you intend to carry visitors on a farm trailer, read the HSE Information Sheet ***Carriage of passengers on farm trailers***.

A **risk assessment** is a careful examination of what, on the farm, could cause harm to anyone who goes there or uses the facilities. Assessing risk is an ongoing process, and you should monitor it constantly.

The risk assessment is an essential requirement for all visits to farms. You can get advice from the Soil Association or from the enforcing authority for health and safety legislation for your premises. Where the open farm is part of a commercial farm, this will normally be the HSE. In other cases, it will be the local authority for your area.





Sample risk assessment for farm activities

Site name:	Grid ref:
Owner:	Tel. no:
Assessors:	Date of assessment:
Nearest hospital tel: Doctors' surgery tel: Site access for emergency vehicles:	

Activity: Trailer rides

<i>Hazard</i>	<i>Risk level</i>	<i>Action</i>
Overhanging branches and brambles on trailer-ride routes	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove any potentially dangerous overhanging vegetation on routes to be used that day Regularly maintain frequently used trailer routes
Open-sided trailer	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before every ride, leader gives a safety talk to make sure that children i) stay seated at all times when trailer is moving; ii) keep their hands, feet and heads inside the green bars; iii) hold onto green bars if necessary Teachers and parents to space themselves between children so that they can reach across if the need to Leader or teacher to sit at back of trailer, with chain secured across doorway before setting off Tell the driver to drive slowly, and make the driver aware of very young children

Activity: Games

Wet ground	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess ground conditions before the visit. Decide whether to a) cancel game or b) play game by walking not running
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Get on my land! Sample risk assessment

Activity: Pond-dipping		
Direct access to pond edge	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fenced area, gated access – no access unless supervised Leader to tell group to first sit on benches away from pond while they listen to instructions, then to dip from purpose-built platform only
Deep water	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put up caution signs, give verbal warnings Put out long poles and throw lines as rescue equipment
Uneven section of boardwalk at far side of pond	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace or even out section
Slippery surface on bridge and platform in wet conditions	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider covering the bridge and platform with chicken wire to make the surface less slippery
Gaps between horizontal bars on dipping platform	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before they start dipping, tell the children not to lean below the lowest bar or lean too far over Make sure the group is adequately supervised at all times
Bacteria in pond water	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & safety talk to all groups Cover cuts and use antiseptic wipes Wash hands with soap and water after activity Give advice on how to use nets to avoid splashing

Activity: Land-use		
Unsupervised small groups	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that every group has a clear map and instructions about where to meet and where not to go Education officer to decide ability of group and allow access accordingly
Unstable gate into oak tree field	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair gate Tell the group going to station F not lean on the gate until it's been repaired
Paths overgrown	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear obstructing vegetation from the paths before the visit



Activity: Soils walk through field

Disembarking trailer on road next to gate into field	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to get off first and check for oncoming traffic, then stand where they can help the group get off safely • Tell the group to stand off the road, next to gate • Get help from the driver if necessary
Unstable gate at top of field	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager to make sure it gets replaced
Digging a hole	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to tell the group how to use a spade safely, by keeping their back straight and not jumping with both feet on spade
Ground conditions – clay soil very slippery and water logged in wet conditions	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warn the group about the conditions and seek an alternative route if necessary
Deep hole by 2 nd site bottom of Annis field	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark the hole with yellow sticks • Tell the group to avoid the hole
Cattle in field	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the children to behave sensibly and stay together when walking past cattle • If necessary, ask the manager to move the bull from the field

Activity: Animals

Dirty and dangerous surfaces on gates, sheep race, sheep pens etc	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warn children before the start of the visit • Staff to monitor the animals daily and clean where appropriate • Jet-wash hurdles before lambing
Hurdles in use not secured	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure or remove hurdles from areas to be visited
General untidiness in orphan lamb area (March–May)	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear this area each morning before the visit
Brooms, forks and other tools in aisle areas in and around lambing shed	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store these away from paths regularly used by children (liaise with farm staff) • Warn visiting school groups – advise caution
Big barn doors not properly secured	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to check that doors are securely fastened
Farm and delivery vehicles moving around yard	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put up speed-restriction signs at the entrance to the yard • Make farm staff aware when there are groups in the yard • Health & safety – make children aware of moving vehicles and instruct to stay as a group

Get on my land! Sample risk assessment

Activity: Machines

Climbing into combine harvester cab	Low/ Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to get into the cab first, teacher to help children at the bottom of ladder • Only three children allowed in the cab at any one time • Children told to climb down the ladder backwards
Machine demonstration (occasional)	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell children to stand together in a place where the driver can see them, and to keep a safe distance away
Stationary farm machinery	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check regularly for loose and dangerous parts • Make sure that all machinery is flat on the ground or roped off • Remove keys from all machines when there are visitors on site

Activity: Grain store

Dust	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave at least one set of doors open when groups are in grain store • Health & safety talk – ask children about allergies and tell them about dust in the grain store • Remind children that the air may be dusty and that they can go outside if they need to
Access to grain store wind tunnel	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education staff to check the door is closed before every visit
Access to ladder up to top of grain store	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cordon off the ladder with hazard tape before every visit
Access to light and power switches	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the children not to touch switches • Set up the activity well away from switches



Activity: River studies (measuring and dipping)

Dead trees along bridleway	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check stability of trees before the visit
Overhead electricity cables near house (top) and halfway down bridle way	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check stability of posts before the visit
Roadside hazard – crossing road from entrance to bridle way	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure there are adults at the front and at the back of the group • Warn the children • Supervise properly
Brambles and thorns at eye-height on bridle way	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear the path before the visit
Weather conditions – especially relevant given lack of shelter at sites	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a first aid kit and blanket on each visit • Tell the school about making sure the children have suitable clothing
Slippery banks	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & safety talk to all groups
Deep / fast flowing water	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the site before the group arrives to make sure the water is not too deep and to remove obstacles from the river • Make teachers aware that the visit may have to be cancelled if, on inspection, you decide that the river is not safe for fieldwork • Put hurdles into the river and rope off any section where river has scoured out a dip underneath the bridge
Using waders	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & safety talk to all groups • Send health & safety guidelines to all schools
Using / carrying field equipment	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & safety talk to all groups
Bridge gets slippery when wet	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell children to walk carefully across bridge
Bacteria in water	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover cuts before starting the activity • Advise children with severe cuts or eczema not to have contact with water • Health & safety talk to all groups • Send health & safety guidelines to all schools

Get on my land! Sample risk assessment for farm activities

Activity: Woodland trail and minibeast hunt (habitats)

Wildlife hazards – snakes, fungi etc	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Warn children not to approach
Overhanging branches and brambles on walk through copse	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cut back as necessary before the visitWarn children as they approach the woodland
Trip hazard – tree roots, slippery leaves	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tell children instructed not to run in the woods and watch where they are walking at all times
Splitting up into smaller groups for minibeast hunting	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Divide the group between the adults, and make sure that there is one adult with each groupTell the groups to stay within earshot
Lifting logs and stones	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tell children to ask the adult in the group to turn heavy stones / logs

Activity: Sweep netting in meadow (habitats)

Metal frame on sweep net	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tell children to sweep a safe distance away from group members; leader / teachers to supervise
Direct access to river from meadow	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tell the group to stay away from the edge of the river