



Module 2 – Preparing for your farm experience

Learning first-hand from a farmer is an inspiring experience for pupils. Good preparation will ensure that each visit to a farm reaches the stated educational goals. In this module farmers as well as teachers get skills and tools for planning attractive and successful farm-visits.



What is the goal of this module?

Unit 1. Get familiar with and check all the important aspects concerning a biofarm visit with pupils and young people - for farmers as well as for teachers.

Unit 2. To obtain skills and tools for detailed preparation and planning of attractive and successful farm-visits, reaching the stated educational objectives.

Unit 3. Be aware of potential risks and get a framework for visitor safety management.

After finishing this module I will have learnt....

1. to check important aspects concerning a biofarm-visit for pupils and young adults.
2. to plan and structure a biofarm-visit in a proper, age-related way - including duration, activities, pre- and post-visit activities in the classroom.
3. to avoid health and safety risks for farm visitors.

Unit 1 – Pre-visit planning

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. identify what makes visits to my farm unique for children (possibilities, facilities)
2. attune the interests and possibilities of the farmer with the expectations of the teacher
3. brief/prepare children/young people for a farm visit

Introduction to the unit:

Learning first-hand from a farmer is an important formative experience, improving knowledge and building interest in the consumption of healthy and fresh produce. Detailed preparation will ensure that each visit to a farm successfully reaches the stated educational goals. In this unit you will identify important aspects concerning to work out a plan for your biofarm visits.



Chapter 1 – Reflecting chances and challenges of school-visits for my farm

Before inviting pupils to your farm, think about your expectations, your possibilities and facilities. Consider what will make visits to your farm different from competing attractions. In the following checklist, you'll find some questions, that might help.

Checklist: [Planning farm visits - questions for farmers](#)

Chapter 2 – Reflect chances and challenges of farm-visits for a school group

Milking cows, making butter or cheese, baking bread, picking fruits, weaving or felting sheep-wool, feeding, watering and stroking animals, mucking the stable, cultivating and harvesting grains potatoes and vegetable, making hay, classifying plants, feeling the soil, stripping the bark from trees... there are so many possibilities for hands on activities for children on a bio-farm. All these learning experiences can – if well planned and organized - be an optimal complement to cognitive learning at school. Besides that, the collective and emotional experiences on farms stimulate pupils and enable social connection among the class. As a teacher, you should think about your expectations.

In the following checklist, you'll find some questions, that might help.



Checklist: [Planning of farm visits - questions for teachers](#)



Checklist: [In-class preparation and In-class-reflection](#)

Other learning tools:

Further material for preparing a farm visit you can find here:

[Information about agriculture in Austria \(school film\)](#)

[Facts and figures about agriculture in Austria](#)

Chapter 3 – Pre-visit planning

Before a farm-visit is carried out, teachers and farmers usually discuss and fix many points on telephone or face-to-face, e.g. date, duration, detailed program, group size or fare. It is good practice to invite the teacher in charge of the visit to a pre-visit.

The questions in the following checklist help to keep everything in mind.



Checklist: [Pre-visit planning](#)



Chapter 4 – Pre-visit pro-forma

When a school contacts the farm for a visit, get back to them as soon as you can and finalise a date. Send a booking form outlining what is available, and any charges, then confirm with a timetable so teachers know what to expect. You can find relevant information/notes that should be mentioned in this confirmation in our checklist "confirmation form for schools/teachers".

It is annoying, if you prepare everything and the group is not coming. And it would be frustrating for children and teachers if they are looking forward to the visit and the farmer forgot it. So better call the teacher some days before the visit to remind to the farm-visit.



Checklist: [Confirmation form for schools/teacher](#)



Unit 2 – Planning and structuring a farm visit

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. plan and structure concrete programs for farm visits
2. plan and initiate pre- and post-visit activities for schools
3. link activities to the school curriculum

Introduction into the topic:

Once your objectives have been set, you can start to plan the finer details of the farm visit. There is a lot to think about. This unit gives support to prepare the concrete program of the farm visit, including specifics of the target-group, the length and activities, all necessary materials as well as pro- and post-visit activities for the classroom.



Chapter 1 – Planning and structuring the event

Before starting your farm-visit-program, prepare a checklist of everything you will need to do in advance, and what you need to take on the day. The following checklist for planning the concrete procedure will ensure that nothing is missed. The priority of this chapter is in planning a proper operation and organisational framework of the whole visit – from saying welcome to saying good bye. Examples for concrete content-based farm activities you will find in modul 3.

It is often advisable to talk to friends and colleagues about your ideas, as some of them might have experience or know people who could advise you in the run-up to the event. When the concrete procedure of your farm visit is fixed, think of, what is needed to be prepared for the visit (e.g. educational material, signs, snack, lunch...).

Checklist: [Planning the concrete procedure](#)



Chapter 2 – Information pack for schools

Provide teachers with an information pack about your farm, your educational facilities and the activities you can offer (e.g. a map and a few facts and figures that the teacher can use in advance).



Checklist: [Template farm-description](#)



Chapter 3 – Pro- and post-visit activities for schools and farms

Teachers have to prepare children for their visit an a bio-farm. After the farm visit the children should reflect their experiences. A guide for pro- and post-visit activities for children and teachers is shown in the checklists “pro-visit activities for schools” and “post-visit activities for schools”.



Checklist: Pro-visit activities for schools

Checklist: Post-visit activities for schools

Once the visitors have left, the farmer and the teacher should take a few minutes to jot down any new ideas he/she have had, or things they would do differently next time. There is always room for improvements. Therefore it's also good to ask the teachers for a short written feedback on the content and the activities.

In the following checklist, you can find some questions, that might help to reflect the farm visit.



Checklist: Feedback for farmers

Unit 3 – Health and safety on the farm

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. identify hazards and risks for visitor safety on a farm
2. to introduce risk control measures that are sufficient to safeguard visitors, but do not lessen the attraction.
3. set out rules of conduct for children and other visitors

Introduction into the topic:

Farmers and teachers want their visitors to return home safe, happy and satisfied with their experiences. It is important to protect them from unnecessary or unreasonable risks. This chapter gives you instruments to identify hazards and risks and introduces a framework for planning your approach to visitor safety, ensuring that it integrates with other management activities.



Chapter 1 – Identify hazards and risks

On a farm visitors are exposed to hazards and risks, they might not know. For a safe visit, it is necessary that farmers, teachers and children are aware of them, to minimize the risk. It may be useful to first define hazard and risk:

- **Risk** expresses the likelihood that the harm from a particular hazard will be realised (for example the risk of slipping on a patch of water).
- A **hazard** is something with a potential to cause harm (the patch of water).
- Hazards only present a risk when there is **human interaction** (someone treading in the patch of water).
- A **risk assessment** involves identifying the hazards present then evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account any precautions already in place (identifying the patch of water as a potential problem; noting that it will be walked past; a sign saying 'slippery floor' is in place).

Identifying possible hazards on a farm

What hazards are the visitors likely to face? What kinds of behavior will increase the risk? How can these risks be controlled? The farmer should be reviewing hazards on an on-going basis and employing risk-assessment techniques. The teacher should, if possible, make a pre-visit check on the location's risks and point out any hazards that she/he feels need management.





Checklist: Identifying possible hazards on a farm

Chapter 2 – How to avoid risks on farm visits?

Consider, if safer systems of work/play/activity are adopted? (e.g. by establish a procedure or set of rules, providing information and skills through training).

You will find general tips to avoiding risky situations in the following checklist “Guidance to avoid risky situations”.

Remember, the farmer and teachers should supervise all children during the visit, especially during hand washing in order to make sure that each child washes their hands thoroughly. Site staff may be able to help with this supervision. Allow plenty of time for hand washing before eating or leaving the site so that the children do not have to rush.



Checklist: Avoid risky situations



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Chapter 3 – Animal related risks

There are special precautions that should be adhered to when handling animals. For children visiting animals is often one of the most attractive part of the farm visit. When visiting animals, ensure that children are well briefed and ensure that they interact with animals in a calm and respectful way. It also helps to choose good-natured animals for the farm visit. Never leave children unsupervised with animals.

All animals will naturally carry a range of micro-organisms, some of which cause no illness in the animal but can be transmitted to humans. Animals can also cause allergies and infections. For these reasons, instruct the visitors in the principles of good hygiene:

- No eating in an area where animals are kept.
- Always wash hands after touching animals.
- Never feed animals with anything not provided by the farm.
- Do not kiss animals.
- Never taste animal foods.



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Chapter 4 – Risks in handling with foodstuff

If the farmer produces cheese, butter, bread or other foodstuff with the visitors, if he/she cooks with them or if snacks, drinks or lunch are served, hygiene is very important.

Some special precautions in handling with foodstuff/catering on the farm you can find in this checklist:

Checklist: Handling with foodstuff

If you provide eating areas, site eating or picnic facilities away from areas where animals can be contacted, or where wind blown contaminated material might be present, and preferably at the end of any farm trail, walk or tour, or outside the main areas of the premises.

- Ensure that visitors have to pass through or by washing facilities before entering eating areas.
- Ensure visitors are advised, e.g. by adequate signage, to wash their hands before eating.
- Exclude animals including captive birds from eating areas. They could contaminate eating areas with faeces.



Consider wing clipping, double gates into eating areas and adequate fencing to exclude them.

- Where eating areas are adjacent to animal contact areas, prevent animal contact, e.g. by providing double fencing. This should be positioned at a distance that will prevent visitors reaching through to touch the animals and to prevent animals reaching over or through the fence to contact people.
- Provide adequate waste bins and clear discarded food from eating areas to discourage wild birds and rodents from feeding and contaminating the area.



Chapter 5 – Insurance coverage of visitors

Schools have insurance cover for educational activities. That means supervision duty of the school extends to farm visits. In case of an accident as well as property damage the injury is covered by the school's civil liability. Make sure that your farm visits are school events. This should be confirmed by the school.

Farmers should make sure, that their liability insurances is liable for all damage to third parties and covers visits on the farm.



Source: Pixabay

Tips and further information:

The social insurance for farmers offers consultation about risk sources and risk management:

<https://www.svb.at/portal27/svbportal/content?contentid=10007.718074&portal:componentId=gtn27187a72-d7bf-49fb-9bc9-4e5314dcf992&viewmode=content>

Chapter 6 – Set farm rules

To ensure safety for visitors as well as for the animals, it is important to set some rules for the stay on the farm. Present these rules to the pupils and explain why they have to be followed. Write them also on a poster.

1. **I am the chef on the farm.** You carefully have to follow my instructions. I tell you, what you are allowed to do. If I say "stop", it's stop. Why? Because I know my animals well and I am aware of possible risks on my farm.
2. **When one is talking, the others listen.** When I tell you something important, I raise my hand. Then you have to be quiet and listen. This is very important, because we're out door und it's not so easy to hear each other.
3. **Only quite children are allowed to go to animals.** My animals are not used to loud screaming and fast motions. They are sensitive and could get sick or hurt with fear.
4. **We stay as a group.** On each farm, there are places that can be dangerous. I'll show you some later and explain it to you. But I want you all to get home save, that's why we all stay as a group together.
5. Things **we don't want on the farm visit:** sweets, electronic games equipment, littering



source: Pixabay

Additional advice

Further advice on E. coli O157 including a video on hand washing is available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/farmsafe/ecoli.htm>

Other advice is available from a number of other government websites including:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health><http://www.defra.gov.uk/>



<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health)

Guidance for managing risks events such as agricultural shows is available at <http://www.asao.co.uk/>