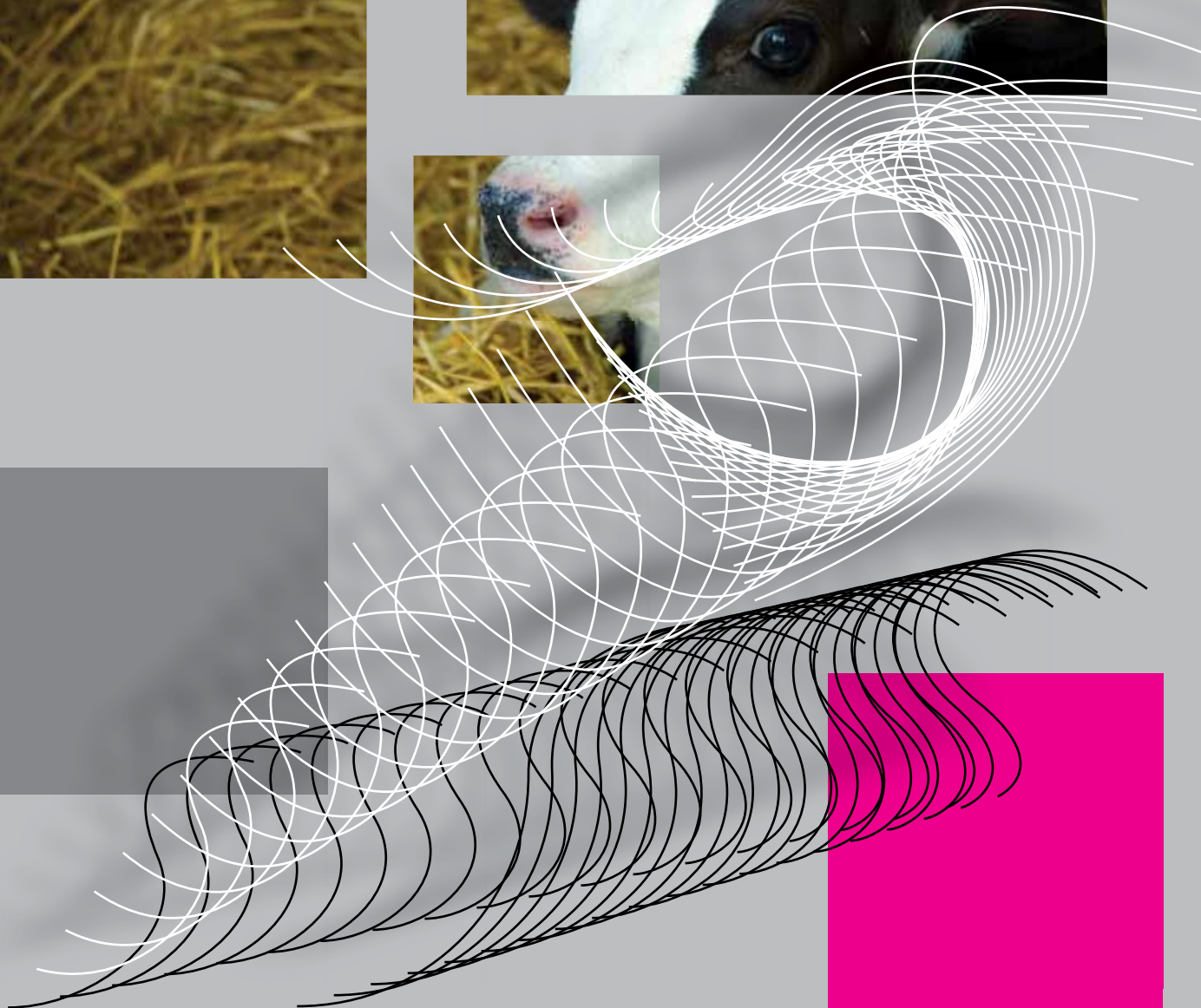


Chapter 4:

The Regulatory Framework for Open Farms

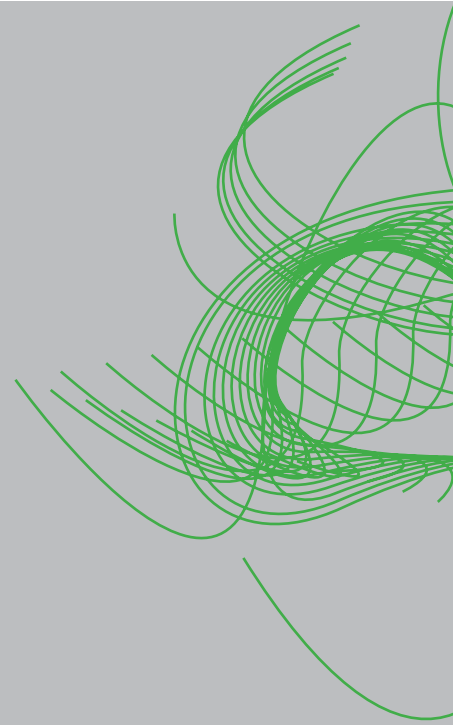


Chapter 4: The Regulatory Framework for Open Farms

- 4.1 Regulatory Control of Open Farms
- 4.2 Current UK Legislation
- 4.3 Main Regulatory Bodies
- 4.4 Inspection Procedures
- 4.5 Standards for Farms including Open Farms
- 4.6 References

Key Points

- The legal and institutional framework for protection of human health and the prevention of disease outbreaks in Great Britain is complex. The prevention of an outbreak involves different laws and combinations of regulatory authorities from those involved in the control of an outbreak of disease
- Separate regimes have been set up by Parliament for animal health including zoonoses, public health, food safety and occupational health and safety. Each regime is the responsibility of a different Government Department, with separate agencies and different mechanisms for delivery of the intended outcomes
- Four separate streams of legislation apply to health hazards that may be present at Open Farms, covering:
 - Public health
 - Food safety
 - Animal health
 - Health and safety at work
- Prevention of risks to human health arising at Open Farms is governed principally by food safety, and by health and safety law which covers risks to visitors and depends primarily on compliance by farm operators with statutory duties
- There is a wide range of regulatory and enforcement options for the control of risks to health and safety. Options include prohibition, licensing, regulations, approved codes of practice and non-statutory guidance
- Responsibility for enforcing the law at farms is shared between the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the local authorities (LAs), depending on the kind of activity at each farm. Inspectors have powers to serve improvement or prohibition notices and to prosecute
- International comparisons show that there is no European Directive for Open Farms but we found some regulations and guidance in individual European countries, plus North American and Australian States. The Netherlands is currently strongly considering replacing its current guidance system with an enforceable statute in view of the risk of zoonotic infection.



Chapter 4: The Regulatory Framework for Open Farms

4.1 Regulatory Control of Open Farms

Different kinds of farm-related activity are regulated in different ways and by different authorities, as set out in detail in a paper by Weightmans Solicitors commissioned by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) (i). Prevention of outbreaks of disease at Open Farms involves laws and a combination of regulatory authorities that differ from those involved in investigation and control of an outbreak.

Prevention depends on compliance by farm operators with duties laid down in food safety, and in health and safety laws. Food safety law is enforced by LAs whereas responsibility for enforcing health and safety law is shared between LAs and the national health and safety regulator, the HSE, depending on the kind of activity at each farm. The HSE inspects the vast majority of agricultural premises but enforcement of health and safety law at Open Farms is the responsibility of LAs, for the reasons described below.

The HSE and LAs maintain a joint liaison committee (HELA) (1), set up in 1975 to provide effective liaison between enforcing authorities. HELA seeks to ensure that health and safety legislation is enforced consistently among LAs and between LAs and the HSE. It provides a national forum for discussion and exchange of information, and issues guidance on enforcement of legislation to the HSE's inspectors and LAs, whose Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) carry out health and safety inspections as well as performing other functions such as food hygiene inspections at Open Farms.

The allocation of enforcement responsibilities under the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998 in respect of farm-related activities is fragmented, as can be seen below in an extract from an administrative circular (2) interpreting the 1998 regulations. Issued to LAs by HELA, it contains an A-Z guide explaining the allocation of responsibility for enforcement at various kinds of premises including agricultural, entertainment and leisure activities (see extracts in Table 4.1).

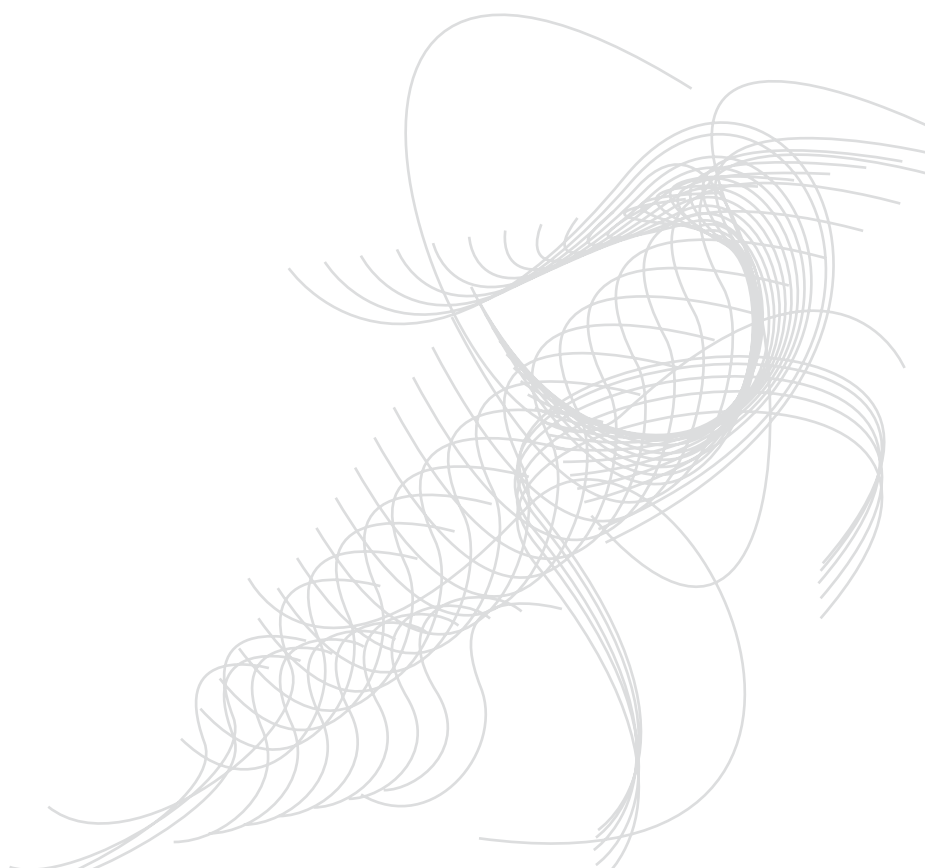
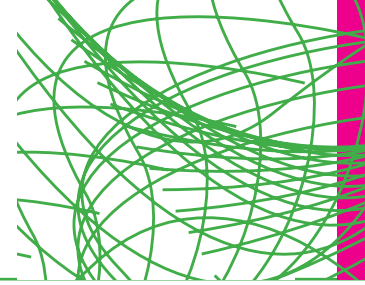


Table 4.1: Responsibility for health and safety enforcement at premises for agricultural, entertainment and leisure activities

Type of activity	Agency responsible	Scope of responsibility
Agricultural activities	HSE	Reg.2(1)(a) defines this as including horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, livestock breeding and keeping, including the management of livestock up to the point of slaughter or export from Great Britain, forestry, the use of land as grazing land, market gardens and nursery grounds and the preparation of land for agricultural use. (Sch 2 para 7). But these activities are not defined as 'agricultural activities' when carried out at a garden centre or other shop. (Reg. 2(1)(b)). LA enforced. For this purpose 'livestock breeding and keeping' does not include activities the main purpose of which is entertainment. (Reg 2(1)). Thus 'Open Farms' visited by the general public would be LA enforced.
Agricultural shows	HSE	Any activity at an agricultural show which involves the handling of livestock or the working of agricultural equipment. (Sch 2 para 7). Horses do not fall within definition of 'livestock' unless used for any agricultural activity, eg, ploughing. LA where no agricultural activity, unless part of a farm and not a separate legal entity.
Animals, birds or other creatures	LA	In connection with the care, treatment, accommodation or exhibition except as below.
	HSE	Where the main activity is horse breeding or horse training at a stable, or is an agricultural activity or veterinary surgery (Sch 1 para 11). Handling of livestock (Sch 2 para 7), fish, maggot and game breeding except in a zoo (Sch 2 para 10). Research.
Education	HSE	
Entertainment (public)	LA	HSE has responsibilities where the LA is the duty holder and for specific Sch 2 activities in premises, eg, fairgrounds, broadcasting, recording, filming, and any activity at an agricultural show which involves the handling of livestock or the working of agricultural equipment.
Leisure/cultural activities	LA	Sch 1 para 9 allocates a wide range of premises to LAs, for example sports facilities, cinemas, circuses, racecourses, riding schools, etc. Cultural activities will include non-educational pursuits such as dance schools, other than those attached to schools.
	HSE	Where the main purpose of the premises is educational or vocational training similar to that provided in the mainstream educational system, such premises will remain with HSE including their evening use for leisure purposes.
Pony trekking	LA/ HSE	The enforcing authority will depend on the main activity. May be subject to the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996.
Zoos	LA	(Sch 1 para 11).

Source: HELA administrative circular LAC 23/15



'Open Farms' are not specifically defined by the 1998 Regulations but as their main purpose has been identified by HELA as 'entertainment' they are the responsibility of LAs (Table 4.1). These arrangements mean that the national health and safety regulator is responsible for, say, 100,000 agricultural holdings throughout Great Britain (3), including farms that open only occasionally to the public, whereas a few hundred Open Farms are inspected by LAs. In practice, most LAs will each have only one or two Open Farms to inspect.

Regulation 5 of the Regulations allows enforcement responsibility for any particular premises or activity to be transferred from the HSE to the LA, or vice versa.

4.2 Current UK Legislation

The legal and institutional frameworks for protection of human health and the prevention of outbreaks are complex. Over time, separate regimes have been set up by Parliament for animal health (including zoonoses), public health, food safety and occupational health and safety. Each regime is the responsibility of a different Government Department, with separate agencies and different mechanisms for delivery of the intended outcomes.

England and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have each established their own regulatory institutions and pursue their own policies for public health, animal health and food safety, whereas health and safety at work has not been devolved but remains reserved to the Westminster Parliament. These complicating factors have relevance to the issues we have been asked to address.

4.2.1 Prevention – Health and Safety Law

There is no European or international regulatory standard for Open Farms. Thus health and safety law applies for the prevention of risks to human health from activities at Open Farms in Great Britain.

Health and safety law was reformed in the early 1970s after Parliament decided that Britain's performance in preventing work-related injuries and ill health was unsatisfactory. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA), based on the common law duty of care, has replaced the previous prescriptive and outdated requirements that had accumulated over the years in the Factories Acts. HSWA applies across the whole of Great Britain. It is 'goal-setting' in the sense that it requires an outcome to be achieved rather than being 'prescriptive' in setting out rigidly what has to be done.

Sections 2 to 7 of the Act contain the so-called 'general duties' of employers and others for ensuring the protection of human health and safety. These general duties always apply, whether or not additional measures are specified. Essentially, they require employers to ensure the health and safety of employees 'so far as is reasonably practicable' (SFAIRP). The term 'so far as is reasonably practicable' has been the subject of interpretation by the Courts. In the decided case of *Edwards v National Coal Board* (4), Lord Asquith said:

"'Reasonably practicable' is a narrower term than 'physically possible' and seems to me to imply a computation must be made by the owner in which the quantum of risk is placed on one scale and the sacrifice involved in the measures necessary for averting the risk (whether in money, time or trouble) is placed in the other, and that, if it be shown that there is a gross disproportion between them – the risk being insignificant in relation to the sacrifice – the defendants discharge the onus on them."



Section 3 of the Act is particularly relevant to businesses such as Open Farms or fairgrounds which invite members of the public into their premises, as it requires ‘every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment who may be affected thereby are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety’. Risks to the health of visitors from activities such as arise in the running of an Open Farm are thus clearly covered by Section 3.

In addition to these general duties, the Act allows a range of other regulatory options. These may be described as a hierarchy of regulatory controls that may be applied to risks ranging from high to low as illustrated by Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: The hierarchy of regulatory controls that may be applied to risks

Risk	Tolerability	Regulatory options
Extremely high	Intolerable	Bans, proscriptions
High		Licensing, permits
Medium		Notification, registration
Low		Special regulations
Very low	Insignificant	Approved Codes of Practice (ACoPs)
		Guidance
		Ignore

A very dangerous substance or activity may be banned. However bans are unusual as much can often be done technically or through safe systems of work to eliminate or considerably reduce the hazard and so remove or reduce the risk. For high risks which are not banned the law expects the maximum effort in terms of time, trouble and expense in order to reduce them to a level as low as reasonably practicable. A licence to operate may be required to which conditions may be attached (eg, for the safe operation of nuclear power stations, for stripping of asbestos from buildings or for businesses running adventure activities). Alternatively a safety case might have to be submitted for acceptance by the regulator before operations may begin (as in the case of offshore oil and gas installations).

Chapter 4: The Regulatory Framework for Open Farms

Special regulations may be made under the Act to deal with a particular hazard (eg, lead, asbestos, electricity) and may apply either to all or certain industries. Many apply to Open Farms and some with particular relevance to this Investigation are:

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (5) which make more explicit the general duties contained in HSWA, require among other fundamental provisions that employers appoint a competent person and carry out a risk assessment and (if more than five persons are employed) record significant findings
- The Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998 (6) which allocate responsibility for enforcement of health and safety legislation (HSE) at different kinds of premises and activities between HSE and LAs. These are set out in Schedules to the regulations
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (7) extends to microbiological risks. The regulations impose duties on employers and require among other things that they do not carry out work which is liable to expose any employees to any hazardous substance unless they have made a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk and of the steps that need to be taken to meet the (other) requirements of the regulations. The duties on employers extend to other persons (including members of the public) who may be affected by their work activities.

4.2.2 Great Britain's National Strategies for Health and Safety

In 2000 the HSE agreed a strategy (8) with the Government for 'Revitalising health and safety at work', in which targets were set to reduce the incidence of injury and ill health and the number of days lost from work; to be achieved by 2010. A key element of this strategy was to reduce the incidence of ill health at work. Following a review, HSE announced in September 2004 that delivery of these targets would in future be addressed by two strategic programmes 'Fit for work, fit for life, fit for tomorrow' (9) and 'Major Hazards'. Subsequently, HSE and the local authorities entered into a Partnership Agreement through which they committed to working more closely together in future. In June 2009 and following a public consultation exercise, HSE launched a new strategy, 'The Health and Safety of Great Britain: Be part of the solution' (10) and a joint Statement of Commitment, agreed by HSE and the Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) to further embed and consolidate partnership working, see: www.hse.gov.uk/lau/statement.htm.



4.3 Main Regulatory Bodies

It is not only the legal framework that is complex. A multifaceted administrative network exists, comprising several separate departments, agencies and authorities with responsibilities or interests touching on Open Farms to a greater or lesser extent. Principal among these in England and Wales are the following:

For public health:

- Department of Health (DH)
- HPA – reports to DH
- LAs
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA), an agency of Defra

For animal health:

- Defra
- Animal Health (AH), an agency of Defra
- VLA
- LAs

For food safety:

- Food Standards Agency (FSA)
- LAs
- Defra

For health and safety at work

- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- HSE
- LAs.

LACORS is part of the Local Government Association Group. It is not a regulatory body or authority but regards itself as part of the regulatory structure, being a council funded organisation that has a long established role in supporting various council regulatory services including health and safety, food safety and animal health.

Northern Ireland has its own arrangements for the above functions. Scotland and Wales have made their own arrangements under devolved powers with the exception of health and safety at work (the HSE's remit covers Great Britain but not Northern Ireland). We heard evidence from devolved administrations about their approaches to prevention and control of outbreaks of *E. coli* O157 and took this into account in our analyses in Parts C and D.

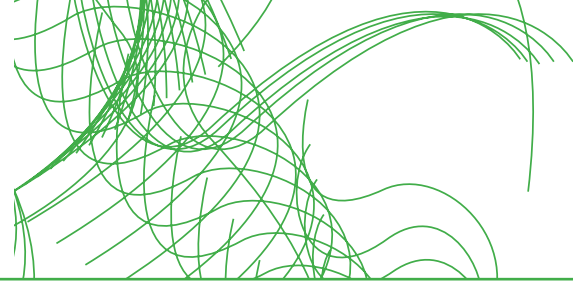


Figure 4.2 The regulatory framework as it relates to Open Farms

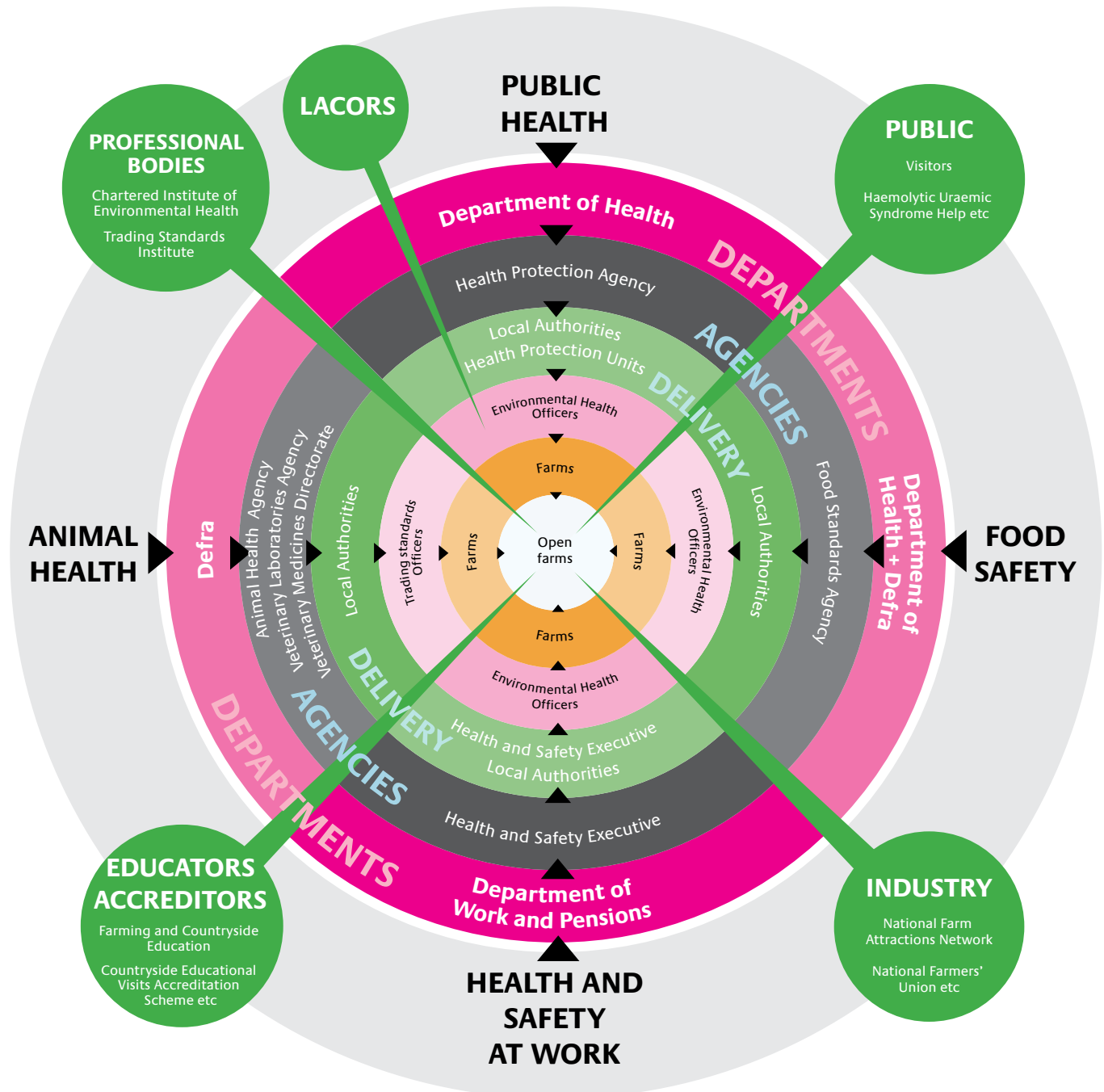


Figure 4.2 illustrates the main departmental bodies and layers of administration involved in regulating public health, food safety, animal health and human health and safety at Open Farms. Some of the principal stakeholder groups are also shown, for example those representing industry, professions, public, and local authority interests. Major delivery agencies such as the Health Protection Agency, Food Standards Agency, Animal Health and the Health and Safety Executive and their enforcement arms are included but for the sake of simplicity other elements of the system are not, such as advisory committees discussed elsewhere in the report.



4.4 Inspection Procedures

Since the 19th Century independent regulatory inspection of how businesses are complying with their legal duties and meeting their responsibilities has been a fundamental part of the UK's health and safety system. Regimes for public health, food safety and animal health and welfare have developed in parallel but separately. Each has its own procedures and standards for inspection.

Some years ago the HSE developed a method to enable its inspectors to prioritise health and safety inspections of businesses according to the degree of risk and management's competence to control it. Known as the Inspection Rating System, it was described in a circular LAC 67/1 (Revised 3) issued to LAs in July 2003.

Enforcement decisions under health and safety legislation are made by reference to the HSE's Enforcement Policy Statement (11) which is consistent with the principles set out in the Crown Prosecution Services' code for Crown Prosecutors, ie, principles of consistency, transparency, targeting and proportionality. Further information on the code can be found at:

www.cps.gov.uk/publications/code_for_crown_prosecutors/index.html

In support of the statement, HSE has developed an Enforcement Management Model (EMM) which helps inspectors decide on what would be appropriate enforcement action in the particular circumstances. The EMM is not intended to fetter inspectors' discretion when making enforcement decisions or direct enforcement in any particular case. Rather, it seeks to promote consistency and proportionality in enforcement by confirming the parameters that need to be considered and the risk-based criteria against which decisions are made. In 2004 the HSE and LACORS on behalf of LAs entered into a formal partnership agreement (12) and a joint report in 2009 (13) includes consideration of the progress made in joint planning and joint working that followed an independent evaluation conducted by PA Consulting in May 2008 (14).

The HSE developed and shared with LAs an Enforcement Management Model (EMM) in 2003 to help inspectors make decisions about taking actions that will be in line with the policy and proportionate to risks. Depending on what they find, inspectors may decide to exercise their enforcement powers under HSWA (15). Actions may range from prosecution to giving oral advice during an inspection, and include serving an improvement notice if in the inspector's opinion a person is contravening a legal requirement. The notice may require the contravention to be remedied and will usually include a schedule setting out what needs to be done. There is an appeal procedure.

A prohibition notice may be served where the inspector is of the opinion that 'activities' being carried on (or likely to be carried on) involve or will involve a risk of 'serious personal injury'. The notice may stop the activity immediately or at the end of a specified period. Again, there is an appeal procedure.

Prosecutions are few in number compared with notices served. They may follow egregious breaches of law, particularly if death or injury has been caused.

Under their Partnership arrangements, further efforts have been made by the HSE and LAs to work together and to record enforcement procedures in instructions shared by their inspectors. The HSE and LAs have a duty under Section 18 of HSWA to make 'adequate arrangements' for enforcement. In 2008 they developed a 'Section 18 Standard' (16) setting these out, including common measures to ensure their inspectors are competent to undertake regulatory activities. An Annex to the circular LAC

67/1 (Rev 3) contained guidance to the HSE's staff and LAs about actions that may be appropriate in different circumstances. That circular was under review at the time of the Godstone outbreak and was replaced in October 2009 by new 'Priority Planning Guidance'. The guidance is described as providing 'the necessary detail to help LAs comply with the S18 Standard on Priorities and Planning and Targeting Interventions' and is 'consistent with priority planning guidance used by HSE's own inspectors'.

4.5 Standards for Farms including Open Farms

4.5.1 Approved Codes of Practice

Practical advice on compliance may be given by a regulator in the form of an approved code of practice (ACoP). For example, an ACoP may explain the meaning of a 'sufficient and suitable' risk assessment in the COSHH regulations (17). An ACoP may be produced for microbiological hazards as is the case for control of legionella (18). ACoPs have a special legal status under HSWA. If employers are prosecuted for a breach of health and safety law and it is proved that they have not followed relevant provisions of an applicable ACoP, a court may find them at fault unless they can show compliance in some other way. There is no ACoP specifically for *E. coli* O157. We noted that since 2007, some Codes of Practice have been approved to do with gas installation, construction, asbestos and work equipment (see www.hse.gov.uk).

4.5.2 Accreditation Schemes

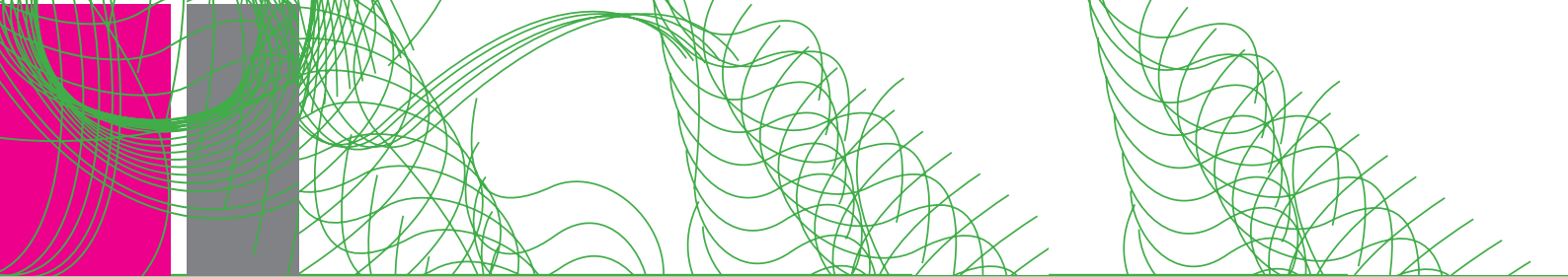
Self-regulation and voluntary accreditation are recognised as playing a part for setting standards. Accreditation schemes, whereby a business or individual can seek a 'badge' from an independent expert organisation with competence to carry out inspections and audits, offer assurance to the public that the business is meeting any relevant standards. The Access to Farms 'Farm Inspected' scheme is an accreditation scheme for farms where educational activities are undertaken.

4.5.3 HSE Guidance on Open Farms

Agriculture remains one of the most hazardous industrial sectors, with a fatal injury incidence rate in 2008/09 (19) of 5.7 per 100,000 workers (compared with 2.4 per 100,000 workers in construction and a national average of 0.6 per 100,000 workers).

Approximately 530,000 people work in agriculture (source: Defra Census 2008) which includes a range of sectors including arable, dairy, livestock and mixed farming, the growing of fruit and vegetables, arboriculture, forestry, production horticulture, agricultural and animal husbandry services.

HSE's strategy for addressing the poor health and safety performance of the industry has changed over time. For many years, the interventions chosen were based on inspection. Latterly, greater resource has been directed to promoting and raising awareness among much greater number of farmers through a variety of communications methods, including direct marketing, Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs) and working with key industry influencers and stakeholders. This approach has resulted from a regulatory decision that an inspection based approach was neither effective nor cost effective in tackling an industry characterised by micro-businesses, self employment and family enterprises. This analysis has continued to underpin HSE's strategic approach to the industry.



The current strategy (Agriculture Revisited) agreed by the HSE Board in May 2008 is set out in Board paper 08/24 which can be accessed from the HSE website.

The Investigation noted the Prevention of Accidents to Children in Agriculture Regulations 1998 (PACAR) and the associated ACoP (20) introduced in April 1999. The regulations apply to farmers or persons responsible for agricultural activities and prohibit children from driving or riding on certain classes of vehicle or agricultural plant and machinery. They do not address the health risks to children from agricultural activities and were not brought to our attention by any witnesses. There is also advice and guidance for farmers (21) that includes how to reduce the risk of accidents to children and young people whether residents or visitors and refers to risks from animals including (briefly) *E. coli* O157 infection.

To assist Open Farms with risk assessments the HSE published free information sheets setting out advice to farmers on practical steps to ensure the health and safety of visitors, including one aimed specifically at Open Farms and the risk of *E. coli* O157 infection (Agricultural Information Sheet AIS23 [discussed in Chapter 8]). LA Inspectors are expected by HELA to make reference to this when inspecting Open Farms. The leaflet contains a supplement designed to help teachers and others who organise visits to farms (AIS23 Supplement) (see **Appendix 5**).

Another information sheet – *Common Zoonoses in Agriculture* (AIS2) – gives general guidance for farmers on the range of diseases carried by animals that can also affect humans and the precautionary measures that should be put in place on working farms and also if the farm is open to the public (see **Appendix 6**).

The advice contained in published guidance such as AIS23 is non-statutory, and is usually accompanied by this legal disclaimer:

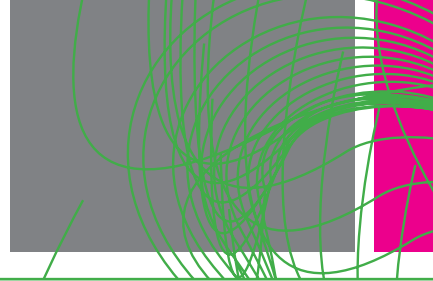
'This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.'

Employers are thus free to take other action, but the HSE takes the view that if they do follow guidance they will normally be doing enough to comply with the law.

In 2003 the HSE produced a four-minute video (22) containing advice about the risk at farms from *E. coli* O157. This can still be viewed on the HSE website.

The HSE issued guidance (23) to inspectors in 2003 on applying the principles of the EMM to risks to health and the standards expected in AIS23 (Rev) on Open Farms (see **Appendix 7**). In 2005 HELA also launched a secure intranet website called HELex where HSE and LAs' enforcement officers can communicate with one another by uploading, downloading and exchanging relevant information and data. This site is not publicly accessible.

After the Godstone outbreak, and following a request by the HPA to the HSE and LAs that all Open Farms should be visited, HELA issued another circular (24) to LAs on 21 October 2009 entitled '*E. coli* O157 outbreak – August/September 2009'. This contained revised advice from the HSE about inspections of Open Farms, reaffirming LAC 61/1 'general guidance on application to health risks' with an annex explaining how to apply the EMM to various scenarios they might find. The circular contained a statement: '*HSE's Biological Agents Unit (BAU) is satisfied that the guidance in AIS23 (Rev) is proportionate and fit-for-purpose providing sensible, practical advice, consistent with that provided in other countries, eg, USA. It is aimed at farmers and through the supplement at teachers or others in charge of visits as a work activity, not at members of the public generally.*'



4.5.4 International Standards for Open Farms

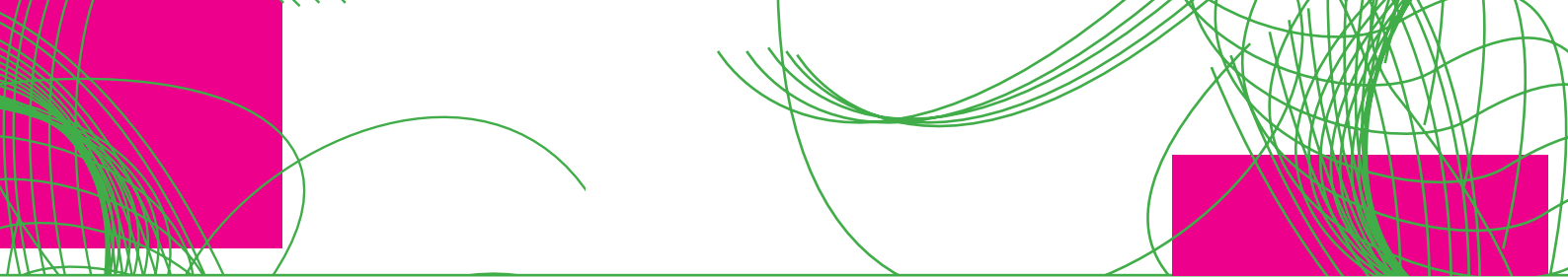
Chapter 1 identifies that agricultural and environmental exposures are a well recognised cause of *E. coli* O157 outbreaks across the world. During the Investigation we searched on the internet and also sought information from expert authorities for more detail on international standards and legislation relevant to Open Farms.

In the USA, a number of outbreaks of *E. coli* O157 have been associated with animal contact, but there is no Federal US law that specifically addresses the issue of preventing disease associated with animals in public settings. The Animal Welfare Act (9CFR Ch.1, Section 2.131) administered by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires petting zoos to hold a licence and is aimed principally at assuring humane treatment of animals, not the protection of human health. However the licensing requirements demand supervision at all times by a trained and competent person if the animals are being handled. Suitable barriers must be in place to protect both the animals and the public from harm. In 2009, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a 'Compendium of Means to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings' (25). This was because of the inadequate understanding of disease transmission among visitors, especially children to Open Farm-type premises and also because of instances in which numerous persons became ill. The report, which includes 'petting farms' (ie, Open Farms) provides recommendations for public health officials, veterinarians, animal venue staff members, exhibitors, visitors, physicians and others concerned with minimising risks associated with animals in public settings.

Pennsylvania enacted legislation that specifically regulates petting zoos (26) and North Carolina enacted legislation in July 2005 that requires petting zoos to obtain permits and undergo inspections (27); the bill is called 'Aedin's Law' in honour of two-year-old Aedin Gray whose exposure led to life-threatening haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) and its purpose is to control public contact with animals, inform the public of risks related to animal contact, provide transition areas, regulate animal care and license petting zoos. Massachusetts and Washington State have available brief recommendations (28,29). The South Australian Government's Department of Human Services has also issued guidelines for control of infections at 'petting zoos' and in Canada the Ontario Farm Animal Council has issued a single page guideline (30).

In Europe, while we are aware of the EU's strategy for improving health and safety at work generally, there is no European Directive that sets out standards or controls over the *E. coli* O157 risk for Open Farms. However, we understand that in Sweden there is legislation that requires Open Farms to be registered and the owners are required to develop a hygiene plan with veterinary input. We understand that in Denmark, the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (Animal Health Division) is responsible for certification of zoological gardens and farms open to visitors and that there is requirement that: children under five years of age are only in exceptional circumstances allowed into animal areas; the person who is responsible for the farm is also responsible for people who have been in contact with animals or their faecal products to ensure they wash their hands afterwards; that visitors are not allowed access to unpasteurised milk or products and all animals must be registered in the equivalent of a County Parish Holding (CPH). Generic advice is similar to AIS23 but it and other information additionally suggest:

1. Only wearing clothes and footwear (eg, Wellington boots) which are washable, when on farms
2. Wash all clothes and footwear immediately after any visit to a farm or leave it on the farm
3. Wash all equipment etc, used on the farm
4. Don't kiss the animals, but please pet them and then wash your hands

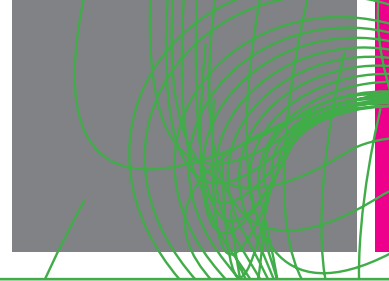
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5. No 'dummies' are allowed on farms
 6. No toys are allowed to be brought onto farms
 7. No ordinary shoes allowed
 8. An 'anteroom' to change clothes is recommended as a 'lock' for people entering and leaving to encourage/remind people to change clothes and wash hands
 9. Wash all clothes at 60 degrees
 10. Information on how to wash hands.

Visitors are also recommended to check the health status of any farm before visiting it and this information is openly available on the internet in Denmark.

We have received, via VLA, information from the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority. The Dutch recognised human infections with *E. coli* O157 as the result of Open Farm visits in 2000. To date, the measures adopted in the Netherlands have been to concentrate on improving the hygiene on farms ('a safe farm environment') and 'teaching' the visitors. The Dutch organisation representing Open Farms has also worked on a quality/certification system to provide information and to motivate the Open Farm owners to invest in providing a hygienic farm environment. The certification is currently voluntary, but it may become compulsory and if so, public farms not having the basic certificate (there are different levels) will be closed to the public. Farms with a certificate will be inspected on a regular basis. Furthermore, we have been told that the Office for Risk Assessment in the Netherlands is currently proposing a stronger regulatory framework regarding Shiga-toxin (VTEC)-producing and other relevant zoonotic pathogens such that enforcement will be possible. This proposal is in the context of the ascending recognition of the importance of zoonotic infection to the human population, especially for visitors to Open Farms (personal communication, Dr RAA van Oosterom).

4.6 References

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