

## Farm Related Illnesses / Be Tick Aware

With many families heading to open farms and outdoor attractions this spring, UKHSA South West is reminding everyone, especially schools and families with young children, to take simple steps to stay healthy.

Most farm related illness outbreaks happen in spring. Farm animals can carry germs such as *Cryptosporidium* and *E.coli* O157, which can spread through contact with animals, their droppings, or contaminated surfaces, even when hands look clean.

### **Always:**

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after touching animals and before eating.
- Use only designated areas for eating and drinking.
- Supervise children closely, especially during handwashing.
- Clean muddy footwear and pushchair wheels before going home, then wash your hands again.

### **Never:**

- Eat, drink, or put fingers near your mouth around animals.
- Let children kiss or cuddle animals.
- Rely on hand gels alone, handwashing is essential.

Anyone with diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, or (especially) blood in their stools within two weeks of a farm visit should seek medical advice from a GP or NHS 111. Stay off school or work until at least 48 hours after symptoms stop. If diagnosed with cryptosporidiosis, avoid swimming for two weeks after recovery.

Spring is also the time of year when ticks become increasingly active, and UKHSA is advising people spending time in the outdoors, including farm visits, woodland walks and green spaces, to be tick aware. Ticks can carry infections, including Lyme disease and, very rarely, tick-borne encephalitis (TBE). Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne infection in the UK. Ticks are most active between April and July, though they can be present all year round. They are commonly found in grassy and wooded areas, including farm environments and countryside paths popular with families during the holidays.

To reduce the risk of tick bites:

- Stick to clearly defined paths and avoid brushing against vegetation
- Wear clothing that covers your skin, such as long trousers tucked into socks
- Use insect repellent containing DEET
- Check yourself, your children, your clothing and any pets for ticks after spending time outdoors
- Remove any attached tick promptly using a tick removal tool or fine-tipped tweezers, grasping as close to the skin as possible and pulling upwards firmly and slowly
- Wash the bite area with soap and water and apply antiseptic cream

A common symptom of Lyme disease is a spreading 'bullseye' rash at the site of the bite, which typically develops 3 to 30 days after being bitten, though this does not occur in all cases. Other symptoms include flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache and fatigue, nerve pains, and numbness or tingling in the hands or feet.

If you develop a rash or feel unwell within a few weeks of being bitten by a tick, contact your GP or call NHS 111 promptly