

HOOOF – Hygiene on Open Farms

Information Sheet 2 – E. coli 0157

WHAT IS IT?

Escherichia coli type 0157 belongs to a group of bacteria that produce a toxin harmful to humans.

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

E. coli 0157 is naturally found in the gastrointestinal tract of animals, particularly cattle. It can survive in the environment for long periods of time.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

From direct contact with animals, particularly on farms. Consumption of contaminated foodstuffs, for example undercooked beef burgers or unwashed vegetables grown in fields where animal manure is used. The infectious dose is low, probably under 100 organisms.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Causes diarrhoea with blood in the stools, headaches, nausea and vomiting, typically within 3 to 4 days of infection, although this period may be shorter or longer.

For those who are very young, very old or already unwell there may be more severe complications which can in some cases result in kidney failure and death.

HOW IS IT CONTROLLED?

Precautions during farm visits by children include:

Hand washing after touching animals, after changing shoes, and before eating and drinking.

Avoiding hand to mouth contact and keeping face away from animals.

Always follow guidelines for farm visits.

How to wash hands-

Simply rinsing the tips of fingertips under cold water does NOT count. Here are some reminders:

- **Always use warm water. It's better to wet hands before applying soap as this prevents irritation.**
- **Rub hands together vigorously for about 15 seconds, making sure both sides of the hands are washed thoroughly, around the thumbs, between each finger and around and under the nails.**
- **Then, rinse with clean water.**
- **Germs spread more easily if hands are wet so dry them thoroughly. Use a clean dry towel, paper towel or air dryer; it doesn't matter which.**