



RISK ASSESSMENT – WORKING WITH ANIMALS

Last Review Date	September 2026
Policy Reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson
Version	V2 25/9/26
Changes since last review	-
Next Review Date	September 2027 (unless an incident occurs requiring an update to procedures)
Covers	Children, staff and volunteers

1. INTRODUCTION

This risk assessment identifies potential hazards and control measures for working with animals at The Ark Smallholding Ltd. It aims to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, staff, and volunteers while maintaining high standards of animal welfare. All procedures align with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and DEFRA guidelines, as well as safeguarding expectations for alternative provision settings.

2. GENERAL ANIMAL HANDLING RISKS AND CONTROLS

Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk (Before Controls)	Control Measures	Risk (After Controls)
Animal bites, scratches, kicks	Children, staff, volunteers	Medium	Supervision at all times. Only trained staff demonstrate handling. Use gloves where needed.	Low
Zoonotic diseases (ringworm, salmonella, orf)	All	Medium	Handwashing before/after contact. No eating/drinking near animals. Regular vet checks and vaccinations.	Low

Slips, trips, and falls in pens or fields	All	Medium	Clear pathways, appropriate footwear (boots), and non-slip mats where necessary.	Low
Allergic reactions (hay, fur, feed, bedding)	All	Medium	Collect medical info pre-visit. Provide PPE if needed. Avoid exposure where possible.	Low
Manual handling of feed/water	Staff, older children	Medium	Use correct lifting techniques, share loads, and use barrows or trolleys. Manual handling training given.	Low
Behavioural risks (children anxious or excitable around animals)	Children	Medium	Maintain appropriate supervision ratios and set clear behaviour expectations.	Low

3. ANIMAL SPECIFIC RISKS AND CONTROLS

POULTRY

Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk (Before Controls)	Control Measures	Risk (After Controls)
Pecking or scratching injuries	Children, staff	Medium	Supervised handling only. Calm approach. Gloves worn if necessary.	Low
Salmonella from eggs or droppings	All	Medium	Handwashing after handling. Staff-only for egg washing. No eating near birds.	Low
Avian influenza	All	Low	Staff aware of symptoms of disease and will contact vet if any signs displayed.	Very Low
Escape of birds from unsecured coops	All	Medium	Coops checked daily. Gates secured during activities.	Low

GOATS

Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk (Before Controls)	Control Measures	Risk (After Controls)
Headbutting or horn injuries	All	High	Only confident, trained handlers. Maintain safe distance when feeding.	Medium
Zoonotic infections (e.g. ecoli, orf)	All	Medium	Avoid contact with open cuts. Wash hands thoroughly. Regular vet checks.	Low
Climbing, pushing or aggressive behaviour	Children	Medium	Do not stand close to feeding troughs. Feed animals one at a time. Feeding closely supervised by staff trained in handling.	Low

HORSES

Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk (Before Controls)	Control Measures	Risk (After Controls)
Kicks, bites, or trampling	All	High	Only trained handlers lead horses. Helmets and boots required.	Medium
Rope burns or trapped fingers	Staff, volunteers	Medium	Wear gloves and maintain safe lead rope handling.	Low
Falling or being pulled by horse	Staff, volunteers	High	Supervised sessions only. Calm environment. Only trained handlers to move horses.	Medium
Grooming	Children	High	Horses to be tied up by staff. Staff to supervise grooming at all times. Correct footwear and hats to be worn. Children to wash hands after handling the horses.	Medium

SHEEP

Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk (Before Controls)	Control Measures	Risk (After Controls)
Butting or trampling injuries	Children, staff, volunteers	Medium	Supervised handling. Avoid crowded pens. Calm approach.	Low
Zoonotic disease (orf, toxoplasmosis)	All	Medium	Pregnant individuals excluded from lambing. Wash hands after contact.	Low
Shearing or restraint risks	Staff	Medium	Only trained handlers to shear or restrain animals.	Low

SMALL ANIMALS (RABBITS, GUINEA PIGS, ETC)

Hazard	Persons at Risk	Risk (Before Controls)	Control Measures	Risk (After Controls)
Bites or scratches from handling	Children	Low	Supervised handling. One animal at a time. Calm seated handling only.	Very Low
Zoonotic disease	Children, staff, volunteers	Medium	No handling if animals appear ill. Wash hands after handling.	Low
Allergic reactions (hay, bedding)	Children, staff, volunteers	Low	Medical info reviewed. Gloves/masks if necessary.	Very Low

4. GENERAL CONTROL PROCEDURES

- First aid kit available and staff trained in first aid for bites/scratches.
- Animal welfare monitored daily and documented.
- Staff trained in safe handling and zoonoses awareness.
- Cleaning protocols for pens and equipment follow DEFRA biosecurity advice.
- Handwashing facilities maintained and stocked.
- PPE provided and worn where necessary.
- Risk assessments reviewed annually or after incidents.