

Volunteer Education Guide for K-12 Students: Farm Safety and Animal Care

1. General Safety Guidelines

- **Stay Alert:** Always be aware of your surroundings. Animals can move suddenly, and farm equipment can be hazardous.
- **Stay Calm:** Animals are sensitive to loud noises and sudden movements. Speak softly and move slowly around them.
- **Supervision:** Always work with a buddy or under the supervision of an adult when handling animals or equipment.

2. Safety Around Livestock

- **Cows, Horses, and Pigs:** These large animals can accidentally step on, kick, or push you. Always approach them calmly from the side where they can see you while you speak to them. Never stand directly behind them. Do not run at them.
- **Goats, Sheep, and Chickens:** While smaller, these animals can still cause harm by butting, pecking, or scratching. Approach them gently and avoid making them feel cornered. We do not chase our chickens and we do not force them to be picked up. They are living beings and our health exams are done with a little more cooperation.
- **Tortoises and Turtles:** Handle these animals with care, supporting their entire body. Never drop them, as this can cause serious injury.
- **Turkeys and Geese:** These birds can be territorial and aggressive, especially during breeding season. Keep a safe distance unless supervised.

3. Hazards on the Farm

- **Behavioral Hazards:** Animals may become defensive or aggressive if they feel threatened or unwell. Watch for signs like raised tails, pinned ears, or vocalizations. If animals are running around in a pen do not enter. If you are already in get out or up as fast as possible and yell loudly for help with the location of where you are at. Example “COWS COWS COWS”
- **Physical Hazards:** Be mindful of sharp tools, sharp fencing, and heavy equipment. Always use tools properly and wear appropriate protective gear (gloves, boots, etc.).
- **Routine Farm Equipment:** Understand how to safely operate gates, latches, and other farm equipment. Never use machinery without permission and proper training.

4. Hygiene and Zoonotic Pathogens

- **Why Hygiene is Important:** Animals can carry germs that can make humans sick. Washing your hands before and after handling animals or farm tools is essential to prevent the spread of diseases.

- **NO KISSES** Yes we want to snuggle and show love to our friends but this needs to be done without kisses as we can easily get yucky germs from farm animals by giving our friends kisses. They have bugs that live on them that are good for them but can make us very sick.
- **Hand Washing:** Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If water is not available, use hand sanitizer provided on the farm.
- **Cleaning Equipment:** Disinfect tools and equipment after use, especially if they come into contact with animal waste.

5. Identifying Sick Animals

- **Signs of Illness:** Look for symptoms like lethargy, loss of appetite, unusual discharge, coughing, limping, or changes in behavior. If you notice any of these signs, report them to an adult immediately.
- **Reporting:** Notify a supervisor if you see any animals that appear sick or injured. Describe the symptoms and the animal's location.

6. Practical Farm Tasks

- **Cleaning Water Buckets:** Empty and scrub buckets daily to prevent algae growth. Refill with fresh water.
- **Refilling Hay:** Ensure hay is fresh and free from mold. Place it in feeders to keep it off the ground in pens where this is needed.
- **Mucking Stalls:** Use a pitchfork or muck rake to remove soiled bedding and manure. Add fresh bedding after cleaning.
- **Composting Manure:** Transport manure to compost bins. Be sure to follow the farm's composting guidelines.
- **Filling Water:** Regularly check water levels and refill troughs or buckets as needed.
- **Walking Around Animals:** Always walk slowly and talk softly. Give animals plenty of space to move.
- **Applying Fly Sprays:** Spray animals from a safe distance or onto a cloth and wipe the animal down, avoiding their eyes and mouth. Use sprays recommended by farm staff.
- **Brushing Animals:** Brush in the direction of hair growth, being gentle around sensitive areas.
- **Leading Animals:** Hold the lead rope close to the animal's head, and walk beside them, not in front or behind. Be calm and watch where you step.
- **Bathing Animals:** Use buckets of water and a sponge unless the animal is comfortable around the hose water and gentle animal-safe shampoo. Avoid getting water in their ears and eyes.

7. Environmental Awareness

- **Respect Wildlife:** Remember that the farm is adjacent to a conservation area. Do not disturb wild animals, plants, or natural features.
- **Trash Disposal:** Keep the farm clean by properly disposing of trash and recyclables. This helps protect both farm and wild animals from harm.

By following these guidelines, you'll contribute to a safe and healthy environment for both the animals and people on the farm. Your awareness and care make a big difference!