

Essex Wildlife Trust

Nature Nursery: Zoonotic Disease – Policy and Procedure

A policy describes what we do and how we do it as an organisation. It is a set of agreed principles which set out a course of action adopted by our staff and volunteers. It will often include acceptable methods, behaviours, and an approved procedure. It is usually internal, although some organisational policies are expected to be publicly accessible.

Version Control

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When review is completed, please send to: businesssupport@essexwt.org.uk

Version	Date	Changes made by	Reason for change
2	31 August 2023	J Burlingham	Update to new format Update of definitions Clarification of terminology and steps Clarify grazing animals held at Abbots Hall and long term plans

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Zoonotic disease (also known as zoonoses) are caused by pathogens that are spread between people and animals.
- 1.2. Zoonotic diseases are caused by pathogens (harmful micro-organisms) e.g. viruses, bacterial, parasites, and fungi. Pathogens can cause many different types of illnesses in people and animals, ranging from mild to serious illness and even death.
- 1.3. Animals can sometimes appear healthy even when they are carrying germs that can make people sick, depending on the zoonotic disease.
- 1.4. Anyone can become ill with a zoonotic disease, including otherwise healthy people. However, certain groups are more at risk than others. These groups are more likely to become seriously unwell and potentially die from a zoonotic disease.
- 1.5. At risk groups include children younger than five, pregnant women, those with weakened immune systems, and adults older than sixty-five.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy is for all staff and volunteers working within the Nature Nursery to ensure the safety of all individuals on site.

3. Purpose of Policy

- 3.1 The purpose of this Policy and the Procedure contained within is to reduce the risk of zoonotic disease transfer from animals to humans, and to prevent children and adults becoming unwell.
- 3.2 The Policy also gives clear instruction on the steps to take if an incident does occur.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 This document details the Policy and Procedures for the control of zoonotic disease at the Nature Nursery at Abbots Hall.
- 4.2 The content will concentrate on the most common pests involved with zoonotic transfer of disease, namely rodents – rats and mice, ticks, and birds.
- 4.3 The history and current use of the entire site is referenced to put the potential risk of zoonotic disease transfer from farm animals into context, so this risk can be managed.
- 4.4 The Zoonotic Disease Policy and Procedure does not cover animals within the Nature Nursery setting itself that the children interact with. This is covered separately within the Animals in the Nursery Policy and Procedure. This Policy is part of the wider Control of Zoonotic Diseases at Essex Wildlife Trust.

5. Procedure and Background Information

5.1 Farm Animals Past and Present at Abbots Hall Farm

- 5.1.1. The field where the yurt is located was previously used for the storage of farm machinery. The larger section (Lambs Meadow) was arable, growing crops on rotation until 2019 when farming ceased at Abbots Hall Farm. Sheep were grazed in this area as a form of land management during 2020. The woodland at the back of the Nature Nursery has been in its present form for 20 - 30 years.
- 5.1.2. The barn next to the Nature Nursery car park is primarily used as a storage barn, for hay and machinery, but also occasionally for livestock. EWT are looking to fully withdraw from using the barns for livestock, however it cannot be guaranteed that livestock will never be temporarily housed here. Due to a certain level of reactive decision making associated with managing the safety and welfare of our animals there may be occasional need for this building.
- 5.1.3. Some animals e.g. ponies are still grazed in the hay fields along the bottom of the site at Abbots Hall Farm and adjacent to the river, on a field rotation basis. The farm is also used for the periodic storage of animals. These animals are either newly purchased or awaiting sale.
- 5.1.4. Long term plans for the Abbots Hall site include the housing of a mix of grazing animals across the site, but these plans are not finalised and will be dynamic to suit the land management plan.
- 5.1.5. We will avoid where reasonably practicable grazing of the two adjacent fields to the Nature Nursery. However, if these two fields are required for grazing a buffer strip will be installed to separate the two areas.
- 5.1.6. All livestock is monitored for welfare and disease and any disease outbreaks will be notified to the relevant authorities via the Health and Safety Compliance Manager.
- 5.1.7. Appropriate PPE kits are held on site for use as necessary.

5.2 Pest Management

Use of a Pest Management Company

- 5.2.1 A professional pest management company will be commissioned to control pests within the Nature Nursery area. Contact details can be found in the appendices.
- 5.2.2 The Nature Nursery is an outdoor learning environment so no pest control can be 100% effective, however use of a pest management company will form part of an integrated pest management system to reduce the risk from pests.
- 5.2.3 The contract will be to control rats, mice, cockroaches, ants, and wasps.
- 5.2.4 The pest control visits will be conducted at six weekly intervals equating to eight visits per annum. Any deviation from this will be reported and recorded by the Nature Nursery Management Team.

- 5.2.5 The site folder will include a site assessment, risk assessments, site treatment records detailing each individual area with findings, method of control and recommendations, safety data sheets, COSHH risk assessments for the chemicals used, a map of bait stations, general contact numbers and emergency contact numbers.
- 5.2.6 The technician will apply pesticides and monitoring devices as deemed appropriate on each visit.
- 5.2.7 All monitoring stations will be tamperproof, anchored to a wall, floor, or fence to reduce the risk of contamination and will be labelled with a number that corresponds to a map of the bait stations. This map will be kept in the site folder. All bait points will be filled with non-toxic monitors and / or traps as standard until a pest issue arises, then the situation will be environmentally assessed before introducing toxic bait to the site. These toxic baits will be used until the issue is resolved and then non-toxic baiting will resume.
- 5.2.8 The technician will leave a written report on the findings, treatments and recommendations made during the inspection.
- 5.2.9 This report will be reviewed by the Nature Nursery Manager (or the Deputy Nature Nursery Manager in their absence) and all recommendations will be followed up. The report will be annotated with actions taken.

5.3 Pest Monitoring

- 5.3.1 Daily inspections looking for wild animal activity on the Nature Nursery site will be actioned. These checks will look for evidence of animal activity on site overnight and look for animal faeces. Any faeces found will be removed before the children have access to that area. All checks and remedial action will be recorded on the opening checklist.
- 5.3.2 As part of the Food Safety Management plan checks will be made of all food preparation, storage and serving areas for evidence of pest activity. These checks will be recorded on the Daily Food Hygiene forms under the pest management question. If any pests or evidence of pest activity is discovered, appropriate remedial action will be taken.
- 5.3.3 Regular audits will be undertaken to verify that the integrated pest management system is effective and that waste disposal procedures are being carried out.
- 5.3.4 The audit will check:
 - 5.3.4.1 That housekeeping and maintenance is satisfactory;
 - 5.3.4.2 That there are no signs of any pests;
 - 5.3.4.3 That the pest control logbook is up to date and all recommendations have been acted on;
 - 5.3.4.4 That bait boxes if recommended by the pest control company are in place and untouched;
 - 5.3.4.5 That physical control methods are operating effectively;
 - 5.3.4.6 That the timber cabin and yurt are proofed against the entry of pests; and
 - 5.3.4.7 That the site is landscaped to maximise the control of pests.
- 5.3.5 Appropriate remedial action will be taken if any of the above checks are found to be unsatisfactory.

5.4 Food Safety Policy and Pest Control

- 5.4.1 Food and drink are served to the children as breakfast, snacks, packed lunch, and supper. Food and drink all have the potential to attract a range of pests looking for food.
- 5.4.2 As a food business the Nature Nursery is registered with the local authority and will be subject to periodic inspections.
- 5.4.3 The local authority responsible for the Nature Nursery is Colchester Borough Council. Contact details can be found in the appendix.
- 5.4.4 The Food Hygiene Policy for the Nature Nursery details our policy on food hygiene.
- 5.4.5 Our Policy is to always maintain the highest standards of food hygiene within the Nature Nursery to prevent pests. We operate in accordance with the relevant food safety laws and to the strict requirements of our own Food Safety Management System (FSMS) which contains detailed Food Hygiene Procedures.

5.5 Staff Training

- 5.5.1 All staff will be trained on the Procedure for Infectious Diseases.
- 5.5.2 Comprehensive training will be provided for all staff and volunteers who are involved with the handling, preparation or serving of any food or drink for the children to minimise the attraction of pests to the site and the inherent risks pests' cause.
- 5.5.3 The training required and refresher intervals for Food Safety Training are detailed below:
 - 5.5.3.1 The Nature Nursery Manager and the Deputy Nature Nursery Manager will be trained to Food Safety Level 3. This will be refreshed every 3 years.
 - 5.5.3.2 All other staff and volunteers who work with food and drink will be trained to Food Safety Level 2. This will be refreshed every 3 years.
- 5.5.4 Trained First Aiders will be always present, and training will be refreshed every three years.
- 5.5.5 Staff, volunteers, and children will be expected to always follow good hygiene practices. Training will take place to ensure good hygiene practice will include regular handwashing and avoidance of hand to mouth/eye contact.

6. Specific Diseases – Overview and Control

Rats and Weil's Disease

Overview

- 6.1 Weil's disease (leptospirosis) is contracted from the urine of infected rats. The bacteria enter the body through cuts and scratches or through the lining of the mouth, throat, and eyes after contact with infected urine or contaminated water. It is a rare condition in the UK.
- 6.2 The disease starts with flu-like symptoms such as a headache or muscle pains. More severe cases can lead to meningitis, kidney failure and other serious conditions. In rare cases the disease can be fatal.

Control

- 6.3 The following control measures will be used to reduce the risk of rats and infection:
 - 6.3.1 The use of a professional pest management company will be commissioned to control pests, including rats, within the Nature Nursery area. (Contact details can be found in the appendices). Full details of the Process and Procedures can be found in section 5 of this document.
 - 6.3.2 Good basic hygiene must be followed, with regular handwashing and avoidance of hand to mouth/eye contact.
 - 6.3.3 The children will be supervised to ensure that they wash their hands thoroughly throughout the day with soap and hot running water.
 - 6.3.4 Hands must be washed thoroughly with soap and hot running water before eating or drinking.
 - 6.3.5 Children, staff, and volunteers must eat and drink only in designated areas.
 - 6.3.6 Children will be monitored to ensure they do not eat anything that has fallen on the floor.
 - 6.3.7 Gels or wipes must not be used as a substitute for washing hands with soap and water. Gels and wipes do not remove bacteria present in the soil.
 - 6.3.8 Trained first aiders will always be available on site to deal with any first aid occurrences.
 - 6.3.9 A first aid box will be readily available, stocked and maintained.
 - 6.3.10 Cuts and grazes must be washed immediately with soap and hot running water. All cuts, abrasions, and other breaks in the skin will be covered with a waterproof dressing.
 - 6.3.11 Existing cuts and grazes must be suitably covered.

Ticks and Lyme Disease

Overview

- 6.4 Lyme disease (also known as *Lyme borreliosis*) is a potentially serious bacterial infection transmitted via tick bites.
- 6.5 There are around nine hundred reported cases of Lyme disease in the UK each year. The ticks feed on birds and mammals that carry the bacterium in their blood and then transmit the bacterium to a human when they have a blood meal. The tick needs to be attached to a person for about 24 hours before the disease can be transmitted.
- 6.6 Not all ticks in England carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.
- 6.7 Ticks that may cause Lyme disease are found all over the UK, but high-risk places include grassy and wooded areas in Southern and Northern England.

- 6.8 In the UK, the risk of tick bites is highest from April to October, when the ticks are most active.
- 6.9 Incubation time is 3–30 days. The first symptom is usually a rash, which spreads from the site of the tick bite. It is not generally painful or itchy. There are often accompanying flu-like symptoms. In a small number of more serious cases there is infection of the nervous system (symptoms include viral-like meningitis, facial palsy, nerve damage). Anyone with these symptoms who has been in a high-risk area must seek medical attention. Prompt treatment with antibiotics is generally effective.

Control

6.10 The following control measures will be used to reduce the risk of infection:

- 6.10.1 Staff and volunteers will be trained to be 'tick aware';
- 6.10.2 Children and adults are to avoid areas of long grass;
- 6.10.3 Exposed skin is to be checked for ticks and any ticks found removed immediately;
- 6.10.4 Clothing is to be checked for ticks and any ticks found to be removed immediately;
- 6.10.5 Insect repellents can be used if appropriate;
- 6.10.6 Trained first aiders will always be available on site to deal with any first aid occurrences;

6.11 A first aid box will be readily available with tick removal tools or tweezers; and

6.12 Any incidents of tick bites or removal will be reported via the Accident forms on the EyWorks system.

Process to Safely Remove a Tick

6.13 The following Process will be used to safely remove a tick:

- 6.13.1 Use a tick removal tool or fine-tipped tweezers to remove the tick;
- 6.13.2 Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible;
- 6.13.3 Slowly pull upwards, taking care not to squeeze or crush the tick;
- 6.13.4 Dispose of the tick once it has been removed; and
- 6.13.5 Clean the bite with an antiseptic or soap and water.

6.14 The chance of getting ill is low. No additional action is necessary unless the adult or child has a rash or becomes unwell.

Avian influenza

Overview

6.15 Avian influenza is a disease of birds and is caused by influenza A viruses. There are two forms of the disease in birds: low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). It is important to note that avian influenza is not pandemic influenza, which is a human influenza virus.

6.16 Wild birds act as a reservoir for avian influenza. Transmission to humans is rare and there have been very few confirmed human cases in the UK. Spread occurs via direct contact with the secretions of infected birds, especially faeces and saliva or via contact with contaminated bedding, clothing, and equipment.

- 6.17 There is no risk of infection from consuming eggs or chicken products. Spread is facilitated by the movement of wild bird flocks, domestic birds, people, and vehicles from contaminated farms.
- 6.18 There has been no evidence of person to person spread, but research is ongoing into whether the virus could change (via genetic reassortment) and acquire this characteristic.
- 6.19 Occupations and processes where avian influenza presents a risk occupational exposure to avian influenza may occur in those who:
- 6.19.1 Are in close contact with infected birds or humans;
 - 6.19.2 Are in close contact with materials or products from infected birds; and
 - 6.19.3 Are in contact with waste from infected birds.
- 6.20 The main symptoms of bird flu can appear quickly include:
- 6.20.1 A very high temperature or feeling hot and shivery;
 - 6.20.2 Aching muscles;
 - 6.20.3 Headache; and
 - 6.20.4 A cough or shortness of breath.
- 6.21 Other early symptoms may include:
- 6.21.1 Diarrhoea;
 - 6.21.2 Sickness or stomach pain;
 - 6.21.3 Chest pain;
 - 6.21.4 Bleeding from the nose and gums; and
 - 6.21.5 Conjunctivitis.

Control

- 6.22 The incubation period is generally 2–5 days but can be longer. Human illness is varied and can range from, in most cases, conjunctivitis or mild flu-like symptoms to severe respiratory illness (pneumonia).
- 6.23 Anyone who has been in contact with infected birds or their faeces and who develops a flu-like illness must seek medical attention. Antiviral treatments are available, which if given at an early stage of the disease are likely to be effective in reducing symptoms and the risk of severe disease.
- 6.24 The following control measures reduce the risk of infection:
- 6.24.1 The seasonal human influenza vaccination can be given to high-risk individuals as a precaution against contracting avian and human influenza at the same time. There is no commercially available vaccine for avian influenza.
 - 6.24.2 Antivirals can be given to reduce the risk of infection for people who have been exposed to avian influenza.
 - 6.24.3 Contaminated equipment must be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant.
 - 6.24.4 Good hygiene practices must be followed, especially washing with warm water and soap.
 - 6.24.5 Cuts and abrasions must be covered with waterproof plasters.
 - 6.24.6 Getting treatment quickly, using antiviral medicine, may prevent complications and reduce the risk of developing severe illness.

6.24.7 Good hygiene practice with regular hand washing and not touching eyes or mouths must be always followed.

7. Procedure For Reporting Zoonotic Diseases

- 7.1 The reporting of any incidence of zoonotic disease is to be reported to the Health and Safety Compliance Manager at the Essex Wildlife Trust. An accident /incident report must be completed which includes reference to the incident and this is sent to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The Health and Safety Compliance Manager will manage the Process.
- 7.2 Ofsted will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable of any confirmed cases of zoonotic disease affecting two or more children looked after on the premises, and always within 14 days of the incident.
- 7.3 When a child becomes unwell, the policies regarding general Health and Safety and Managing Children who are Sick or with Allergies Policy and Procedure must be followed to stop the spread of infection and / or further occurrence and to ensure appropriate action is taken so that the child receives the appropriate support and correct care.

8 Appendices

This policy is to be read in conjunction with wider Essex Wildlife Trust Policies and Procedures

- 8.1 Accident and Incident Procedure
- 8.2 Animals in the Nursery Policy and Procedure
- 8.3 Changes and events to be notified to Ofsted
- 8.4 Complaints Policy and Procedure
- 8.5 EYFS - Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (up to date version available via Government website)
- 8.6 First Aid Policy and Procedure
- 8.7 Food Hygiene and Preparation Policy and Procedure
- 8.8 Managing Children who are Sick or with Allergies Policy and Procedure
- 8.9 Nature Nursery Risk Assessments
- 8.10 Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults at risk policies and procedures Part 1 and 2

Further Guidance

- Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk
- EHO documentation
- Food Safety Management System (FSMS) – Safer Food Scores
- Daily, Weekly, Monthly Food Hygiene Checks
- Cleaning Schedules
- Approved Suppliers
- Pest Control contract and reports
- COSHH data sheets
- COSHH risk assessments

Contact Details

Environmental Health Department – Colchester Borough Council. Council Offices, 33 Sheepen Road, Colchester, CO3 3WG. Tel 01206 282840. Email food.safety@colchester.gov.uk

Safer Food Scores – 121 High Street, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 2DJ. Tel 01442 877322. Email hello@saferfoodscores.co.uk

Killer Instinct Pest Control, Suite 1, The Causeway, Great Horkesley, Colchester, CO6 4EJ. Tel 0800 6446 200. Email dan@pestcontrolcolchester.co.uk . Website www.pestcontrolcolchester.co.uk

List of Zoonotic Diseases

1. Zoonotic diseases found in the UK

2. Selected zoonotic diseases exotic to the UK

Note: Some zoonotic diseases are endemic in the UK, and others are considered 'exotic.' Important zoonotic diseases in both categories are shown on the appendices together with their reservoirs and how they are transmitted to humans

References / Further Reading

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/zoonotic-diseases-zoonoses-guidance-data-and-analysis>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-zoonotic-diseases>
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796824/Farm_visits_avoiding_infection.pdf
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/lyme-disease-guidance-data-and-analysis>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/zoonoses-data-sheets/lyme-disease.pdf>
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/zoonoses.htm>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme>