

GENERAL AND SCHOOLS RISK ASSESSMENT

**CANTERBURY OAST TRUST
RARE BREEDS CENTRE
HIGHLANDS FARM
WOODCHURCH
KENT**

Thank you for considering a visit to South of England Rare Breeds Centre. We want you to have an enjoyable and pleasant time and have produced this assessment to advise you of the risk associated with a visit and the measures put in place to try to keep everyone safe.

In the last 10 years we have safely and successfully hosted over 1000 school visits. The safety and enjoyment of your staff and pupils are our primary concern.

If during your visit you observe anything that causes you concern or that you consider would be an appropriate addition to this information sheet please let us know as we are always seeking to improve our arrangements for future health and safety.

Teachers are advised that once a booking has been made The Rare Breeds Centre will allow a familiarity and safety visit by 2 representatives of the school making the booking. This must be pre arranged. Please contact reception for further details.

GENERAL RISKS

CHILDREN SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED AT ALL TIMES

1) FIRE

IN THE EVENT OF FIRE

Assessment of risk; Fire can happen at any time. The restaurant, administration centre and shop are all equipped with alarm systems, extinguishers are available, regular electrical checks are carried out on the wiring and the equipment. Fire exit routes in buildings are signed.

ALL BUILDINGS ALARMED WILL AUTOMATICALLY SOUND BELLS.

ON HEARING THE BELLS STAFF WILL ASK YOU TO LEAVE BY THE NEAREST FIRE EXIT.

THE MAIN ASSEMBLY POINT IS THE OPEN SPACE IN FRONT OF RECEPTION

We ask teachers and other supervising staff to gather children under their control and keep them in one group.

Please let a fire warden know if anyone is unaccounted for.

AWAIT DIRECTIONS FROM FIRE WARDENS.

**WE ASK YOU NOT TO TRY TO EXIT THE SITE AS THIS CAN STOP ARRIVING EMERGENCY SERVICES FROM HAVING FREE ACCESS.*

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD ANYONE RE ENTER A BUILDING ONCE EVACUATED.

ACCIDENTS / FIRST AID

IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT PLEASE GO TO EITHER THE SHOP BY THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE FARM OR RECEPTION OR TO THE RESTAURANT AND ADVISE STAFF.

COT HAVE SELECTED STAFF TRAINED IN BASIC FIRST AID WHO CAN BE CALLED or WHO WILL CALL FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.

The site has first aid kits available for use. Staff in the shop, restaurant and on our farm will call emergency services in the event of an accident that requires more qualified support.

COT cannot administer lotions, medication or other substances that have potential for allergic reaction.

**The site attracts bees, wasps and other insects. We regret that we cannot administer medicines in the event of a sting etc. If anyone has an allergy or needs medication we ask them to bring their medication with them.*

All accidents are recorded and investigated. If you do suffer an accident, even if it is very minor, please report it to a member of staff. This represents our chance to investigate and prevent any repeat from occurring.

1) Some areas of the farm are a long way from immediate assistance. The areas have a minimal staff presence.

2) The Rare Breeds Centre is also in a poor reception zone for some mobile phone networks.

Please discuss with COT staff any intended activities that are away from the main centre.

Areas that we will need to make arrangements for emergency contact include;

**The Farm Trails
Mysterious Marsh
Aerial Runway**

General notes

Trips, slips and falls

The area covered by the Rare Breeds Centre is extensive and includes wooded areas, farm land, fields, natural pathways and variations in surface levels. The risk of a slip trip or fall can be increased adverse weather.

Footwear; We recommend the use of footwear suitable for uneven or slippery conditions. Wellingtons may be appropriate at certain times of year but may be a hindrance if other activities are planned. Sandals are generally not a good choice. Sturdy outdoor shoes are recommended.

The Rare Breeds Centre has Wellington washing facilities on site (located by the wash station near the shop) and recommend that footwear is washed before leaving.

Communication

Again we emphasise that the site is large and in a poor reception zone for some mobile phones.

A number of staff carry radios and can call for assistance. Tractor drivers always carry radios.

Staff carry out regular 'walkabouts' when on duty.

HYGIENE

The Rare Breeds Centre is an active animal farm and there are risks associated with animals, especially relating to hygiene / infectious diseases. The animals are regularly inspected by both our trained staff team and by other specialists. We try to keep our animals in top condition. However careful we are there is a chance of cross contamination.

*Direct contact with animals or their waste products can spread infection. Gates and fences where animals are located are likely to carry some bacteria that can be picked up by any contact.

COT has hand washing facilities in several locations including a hand wash station outside the animal Discovery Area, (see below), the most likely area where contact with selected animals is sometimes allowed.

We recommend that hand washing should be at regular intervals but **ALWAYS;**

- 1) After any contact with an animal
- 2) Before eating or drinking
- 3) Before leaving the site

Please note that Environmental Health advice regarding **ALCOHOL GELS** are:- that they represent a further precaution against infection but are **NOT A SUBSTITUTE** for **HAND WASHING**.

A frequent method for picking up infection is to touch a contaminated surface with hands and then to touch your mouth or eat food before hands have been washed.

Keeping hands away from face, mouth and eyes is recommended.

Another common route for bacteria to enter the body is through an open wound or break in the skin. Any cuts or grazes need to be covered with a waterproof plaster.

Please ask staff for plasters if needed.

Pregnant women are specifically advised not to touch sheep at any time, especially during lambing as this carries a high risk of harm to the mother and the unborn child.

ANIMALS

Our animals are not pets and could present a risk in some circumstances. We try to keep all our animals in good health, but they can suffer from diseases or transmit infection. We will, of course, withdraw any animal that we know to be unwell or distressed.

We have hand washing facilities around the farm and any contact with animals necessitates hand washing.

Covering any cuts or breaks to the skin will also greatly reduce the risk of infection.

Although our animals are used to visitors they can kick, butt and bite. The farm is fenced off generally but some animals can present a risk, especially if people put fingers to cages. (Chipmunks, Ferrets, Geese, Birds of Prey, even rabbits can bite and chickens peck.)

Please do not encourage children to put fingers into fences, cages or wires.

We do encourage some contact and make certain animals available. Ducks, geese, piglets, small goats are generally about. These animals are reasonably safe and are not known to be aggressive. Most animals do not like being cornered but any animal that could cause significant harm is never allowed out for general access.

Staff are usually on hand to allow children some contact with selected animals You can 'meet the animals' in the children's Barn.

The animals in the Encounter paddock are amongst the friendliest. supervision from Rare Breeds Staff is not likely in this area.

AVERY

A poly tunnel containing rare smaller birds and a few small animals (guinea pigs etc). The birds are non aggressive and fly free within the Avery

There is an infection risk presented from bird waste.

The Rare Breeds Centre recommends washing hands after leaving area.

Providing hand washing is undertaken this is a low risk activity

BIRDS OF PREY / OWLS

We have introduced a number of rarer species and some of these will be made available for children to touch. We obviously have concerns for the bird's welfare and they are carefully selected for this purpose.

The birds are accompanied by a trained handler and specialist.

We ask teachers to closely supervises children in their care and encourage them to be gentle around the birds and to avoid loud noises and sudden movements.

The birds are only safe when handled by specialists. The birds are out on display and can be resting on perches or in there cages. Caution is required around the cages to ensure that visitors do not put fingers to the wire or get too close to these birds.

When birds are being flown in the paddock there will always be a handler on site. The handler will ask children not to go to the fence as the birds fly close by. These are living animals and do have a mind of their own. Occasionally they will fly off course. They do have sharp talons and beaks and for this reason we ask parents and supervising staff to **keep children in their care away from the fence while the display continues.**

CREEPY CRAWLY WORLD

Indoor display of insects, reptiles and animals.

Most are within glass viewing cages. The glass is safety specification but, in extreme circumstances it can shatter under extreme pressure.

We ask that children do not run around in the room where these animals and insects are housed both for the safety of the child and for the welfare of the animals.

VEHICLES / PEDESTRIANS

The coach park is situated before the general car park as you head for the entrance to the site.

We have a 15 mph speed limit on site and speed humps in the road. We do try to enforce this limit but please be aware that some motorists ignore the instruction and occasionally a lorry can be reversing.

The coach park is off the main road but children need to walk along the road a short distance past the entrance to the car park and will need supervision until they make the area by the Playbarn. The only traffic allowed in the site during the day is for the disabled and staff vehicles. Occasionally a delivery lorry has to access the restaurant so some vigilance is required.

MACHINERY / FARM OPERATIONS

The farm vehicles are kept away from the car and coach park. Movements are heavily restricted from 10.00 to 4.00. Our drivers are experienced and know the dangers presented by excited children.

The farm equipment is kept away from the public in a compound. The tractor and trailer that is used for the rides is on site and can be left for short periods with the keys removed. Groups are asked to keep children off of equipment for their immediate safety and also to stop damage to the equipment that could present a hazard in operation.

The tractor rides (see below) do operate periodically. The driver is very experienced but usual care is required around vehicles.

ACTIVITIES

TRAILER RIDES

The ride takes passengers on a tour of the farm in a covered trailer towed behind a tractor. The driver supervises the ride and carries a radio.

Passengers are supervised on and off the ride.

The trailer is covered and has protective padded bars on the side. The tailgate is secured by a gate. The tailgate is bolted and chained by the driver before each trip commences.

The seats are straw bales.

The vehicle and trailer are inspected daily with a more thorough monthly check and servicing in accordance with manufacturers guidance.
The activity will be stopped in bad weather.
Passengers are expected to remain seated during the journey.
Speeds are low. Some of the terrain is uneven and can cause a loss of balance if passengers stand.
In 2008 the road was renewed and this has significantly reduced the hazard and improved the ride but users remain at risk if they stand up during the trailer ride.

PIG RACE

Volunteer children are sometimes supervised to assist in the pig race.
Young pigs are used.
The pigs are selected by the farm manager who ensures that they are calm and suitable for the event.
The children have boards to guide the pigs back down a prepared course.
The children are escorted by COT staff.
The event is controlled by COT staff.
The event is run on grass.
There is a minimal risk of a kick from an animal. (In 4 years to Sept 09 this has never happened).The boards should prevent this and staff are on hand for immediate assistance / guidance.
COT staff have communication radios.
We have a first aid box on site and staff have basic training.

SWINGBRIDGE BARN

Supervision is required.

The Swingbridge barn is an indoor assault course. Children have to find their way round a number of professionally constructed obstacles that includes bars, beams, chains, climbing frames, swing rope.
The fall height is very low, under 600mm.
The ground surface is sharp sand, it does have some crushed ballast in the content, so it is not suitable (or intended) for general play activity. There is a risk of an eye or other injury if the sand is thrown.
The main risk in this area is of a trip / slip or fall.
It is in doors and generally does not get slippery.
The barn is regularly patrolled but not always supervised.
There is an emergency call point in the Playbarn which is next door.

PLAYBARN

Supervision is required.

Indoor play area that has professionally designed play equipment in use.
There are slides, climbing frames, ball games enclosed within a safety enclosure.
The potential fall heights are under 600mm.
The slide presents the usual hazards. Its design is such that a fall from the edge is not possible.

The most likely injury will be due to someone trying to turn on the way down the slide and getting a finger, or toe under their body as they come down. Friction burns are a possibility. We advise that socks must be worn and that contact with the edge of the slide is avoided.

We ask that only one child uses the slide at a time.

Nets are used all round the activity to limit potential for falls.

We ask children over 10 not to use the facility.

The Playbarn has an emergency call point for staff assistance.

MAZE (Not a permanent fixture)

Straw bail maze under cover.

Users pass through passages and under straw tunnels.

No smoking area.

HORTICULTURE SHOP

Sells a variety of plants and horticultural items.

Has a greenhouse that has been subjected to control measures including glass that has protective foil to prevent it from breaking up in the event of an accident. The greenhouse has a fence around its outer perimeter.

Horticultural substances are locked away.

The site is staffed when open.

The shop exits onto the restricted area. There is minimal vehicle use here.

Beyond the restricted area is the general exit route used by all traffic. The exit to the main road is about 500m so it would take a child some time to reach the road.

OUTSIDE AREA BY RESTAURANT

Eating area used by families.

Has a play pit that has bouncy animals intended for use by younger children.

The surface is wood chip to limit the risk of an injury if a child fell.

These are intended for toddlers only.

There are benches for eating food purchased at the restaurant. These are low back design.

The area is surrounded by fencing to prevent children wandering off into danger areas or areas used for COT activity.

DISCOVERY BARN

The barn allows closer contact with a variety of animals as well as information. Some, for example the ferrets and chipmunks, can bite. We ask children not to put their fingers through the mesh.

Need for hand washing if any contact with animal or cage is made.

The wash station is nearby on the opposite side of the road.

PLAY GROUND

Supervision required

Climbing frames, slides, swings, picnic area.

Safety surfaces as required. There are drops above 600cm.

The surface is generally grass.

The equipment is checked on a regular basis and has an annual

specialist visit.

AERIAL RUNWAY

Not suitable for younger children. Supervision is required.

Seat attached to a gravity fed cable runway. User sits on carrier and travels the length of the wire.

Needs to be used by one child at a time.

Needs to be supervised.

The surface is grass with woodchip at the far end of the run.

The rider needs to keep legs up as they ride to avoid contact with the ground.

As the carrier stops at the end of its run there is a rapid loss of speed. This causes the seat (and rider) to swing in a pendulum motion.

The site is about 300 metres from the nearest first aid point.

FORT

Supervision is required.

The fort is accessed by means of an earth bank. The bank can get slippery when the ground is wet.

Inside the fort children can climb vertical ladders to a higher level and look out over the walls. The ladders have a safety surface below them. There is a slightly increased risk of a fall when a child climbs onto the ladder to come down.

Care is needed to prevent children trying to climb up the walls on the inside of the fort as the drop height is over 3 metres.

There is a net climb and a slide that goes into the lower level of the fort through small windows. There is a safety surface (woodchip) below the slide and the net.) There are grab bars.

MYSTERIOUS MARSH

Needs supervision.

An outside assault course.

Professional equipment includes balancing bars, chains, monkey bars, rope swing. The site is inspected daily and the equipment is checked periodically. Because it is an outside play area it can get slippery when wet.

The site is about 600 metres from the nearest first aid point and is not staffed generally although the tractor ride passes at regular intervals with a radio on board.

The site has a stream running through it. This is quite dry most of the year but can fill. COT may close the site if the stream became too full. Some access is limited by the design of the course but the water is not fenced off and it is possible that the banks are slippery.

The course is in the woods and this presents natural trip / slip hazards, for example roots, stumps, loose leaves. Appropriate footwear and supervision is required.

In a restricted and fenced area at the top of this site is a pond. During spring and summer the pond is relatively shallow but sufficient to present a risk of drowning if accessed.

DISCOVERY GARDEN

An area dedicated to demonstrating and explaining how we grow domestic fruit and vegetables. Low risk area.

There is a pond behind the discovery garden. There is a fence. The water is deep enough to cause harm should a child breach the fence.

BUTTERFLY TUNNEL

A thermostatically temperature controlled polytunnel where butterfly's are free to fly amongst the plants.

Information relating to butterfly's and moths from around the World.

FARM TRAILS

There are 3 walks around the farm of different duration.

The ground is uneven and can be slippery. There are natural trip hazards, for example roots, stumps, leaves. The surface can get slippery if wet.

Recent work has installed a number of wooden walkways to assist access for wheelchair users. This work is ongoing but there remain some areas that are uneven.

Sensible footwear is recommended.

In the event of an emergency it can be 2 km from assistance so mobile phones are needed.

Please note that some mobile services are unavailable from areas of the walk.

DEEP WATER

On the long walk you will pass deep water at five points. (There is a 6th area of deep water but this is nearer the farm and is fenced off from direct public access. (See also discovery garden above).

The largest area of deep water is at the top of the site. There is a lifebelt and danger signs. The banks are either fenced or clearly visible. The banks are natural and can be slippery.

The top lake has a fenced wooden decking area for closer access. Children need to be supervised and asked not to climb on the fence.

The other areas of water are less obvious.

The first is located in the woods above the mysterious marsh. There is a fence around the site and access would be difficult but the water is deep enough to present a drowning risk.

There is no life belt.

Two ponds are located adjacent to the road opposite the aerial runway. This is a public footpath and there is a stile over our fence required for public use.

The large pond is fenced off and would require deliberate action to allow close. there is a lifebelt.

The smaller pond has less substantial fencing.

There is a small pond by the Interpretation Lodge.

The pond has slippery sloping edges that are in the process of being established. The water is deep.

The pond has a life belts.

The lodge itself is low risk and has information relating to local crafts and wildlife.

The walks include areas that have log steps. These can be slippery when wet. The path can be badly rutted by horses or vehicles that do have a right of way.

The use is minimal during opening times but there is potential for a hazard. As a public right of way the Rare Breeds Centre has little control over the use by horse riders and the occasional vehicle.

Some areas of the farm trail see very little COT staff presence.

Most farm staff carry radios (the tractor ride driver always has one) if assistance is needed but their presence is not guaranteed.

**Supervision of children around the trails is recommended.
Maps of the farm trails are available and they show the water hazards.**

In addition to the deep water mentioned above there is a duckpond by the playground.

This is fenced off and has a lifebelt.

The water is deep enough to present a drowning risk.

Access would need damage to a fence or unreasonable action.

Supervision is required to prevent children climbing the fence.

There is an access point for ducks. It has been designed to make a child accessing unlikely. There is a small risk that a small child could crawl through the passage.

CONFERENCE FACILITIES

The site has conference and training facilities.

These can attract large amounts of people who pass through the play area used by children.

The conference room has 3 fire exits.

The fire system is maintained to usual standards.

Fire extinguishers are present and tested annually.

There are evacuation notices displayed and exit routes signed.

COSHH products are kept from general access.

Please discuss health and safety when placing a booking.

SPECIAL EVENTS

COT holds many special events.

These are usually at weekends and do not generally conflict with school visits but on occasions preparation or dismantling is going on when the site is open.

We try to limit access but this can mean increased vehicle movement.

We would be pleased to discuss with you any further points that you may have.