

Sarah Urwin Therapy Services

Health and Safety Policy

Sarah Urwin Therapy Services have a separate **Infection Control Policy** which covers matters associated with health and hygiene, and also a separate **Fire Policy**.

Risk Assessments - We carry out regular risk assessments for all the activities that take place at Youngs Farm and also for each individual client who works with the animals on the farm. These risk assessments are held on individual client files but a template is attached to this policy for information.

Pre-session visits – A robust assessment process is in place and pre-session visits are welcomed, when clients can meet the animals, get a feel for the environment and see if it is going to suit them.

Suitability of animals – Animals are selected for their suitability for this type of work. Any training is done using positive re-enforcement methods, as advocated by the IAHAIO. Session lengths and their frequency are restricted to take into account the needs of each individual animal. A risk assessment is carried out for each animal in the programme with particular reference to their natural temperament and the way they handle stressful situations. All animals can be un-predictable at times and they may react in different situations. All this is considered when preparing risk assessments.

Animal Welfare – The principles expressed in **The Five Freedoms** are core principles of all interactions with animals at Youngs Farm.

Animal checks - Prior to sessions each day the health of all animals is carefully checked.

Unwell animals – animals who are sick, showing signs of illness, or who have recently given birth, pose a potential health risk to humans. All animals in this group are housed away from the main yard and will not come into contact with clients until they have fully recovered and been checked by our vet.

Zoonoses – Some potential infections maybe carried by pets or livestock (i.e. Orf, Ringworm, toxoplasma) and there is also a possibility that skin infections could pass from humans to animals. In order to minimise these risks regular vet visits are scheduled every 3/6 months and clients are also made aware of the need to check their own health status before sessions commence.

Food for animals – Clients are made aware that they are not allowed to feed any animals titbits or treats at Youngs Farm. All food for the animals is provided by the farm.

Animal Medicines – Are only given by staff and are then recorded in the Medicines Log.

Visiting animals – No animals from other farms or programmes are allowed on the premises, to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

Treatment of animal waste – Animal contact areas are always kept free from a build up of faeces and urine, and cleaning and disinfecting is carried out on a regular basis, at least once a week. On the very rare occasions that clients, supervises or students become involved with the disposal of faeces and other waste they will wear appropriate PPE including rubber gloves and overalls.

Supervision - All interactions between participants and animals will be supervised to some extent and animals and clients will be kept within line of sight. Clients may sometimes behave unpredictably and act in negative ways towards pets and other animals.

History of abuse - The assessment process tries to establish if a participant has a history of abuse towards animals, or other people. There is some research evidence to suggest that where clients have been abused by others, there may be a link to them abusing animals, or other people.

Allergic reactions – Some participants may have an allergic reaction to fur/dander/pollen/hay dust and other allergens in the farm environment. The assessment process captures this information prior to starting sessions and arranges for the necessary medicines, or remedies (i.e masks), to be taken or easily available where needed.

Immune Deficiency – Some participants may have challenged or compromised immune systems, particularly if they have just undergone a detox programme. It may also be the case for some clients who self-harm or have eating disorders. The assessment process captures this information prior to starting sessions. This may result in sessions with the animals being delayed until a client is stronger, because of the risks posed by the animals and the farm environment, but there may be options to observe animals for a period of time, rather than direct touch, to reduce the risks.

Minor wounds – Puncture wounds and significant bites or scratches are referred to the local GP surgery, New Valley Practice in Crediton, without delay.

Slips, trips and falls – Are the most common cause of minor injury and all clients are encouraged to take care and take responsibility for their own behaviour whilst on site, especially in wet, slippery, muddy or icy conditions. This is discussed in full at the assessment and contracting stages.

Manual handling - Clients are not required to manually handle any feeds or other heavy items.

Accidents and Incidents including near misses – All accidents and incidents must be reported and recorded in the Accident log. The Health and Safety lead is Sarah Urwin and HSE guidelines are followed including RIDDOR protocols, where necessary.

Immunisation – Immunisation against tetanus is advised for those in very regular contact with the animals.

Building/site checks – Prior to sessions each day, buildings, fencing, gates and work areas are checked for safety. Appropriate notices, guidelines and signage are displayed. Handwash and changing facilities are kept clean. First Aid kits are clearly visible and clients are informed that the lead First Aider and Health & Safety person on site is Sarah Urwin. The Accident Log is easily available. All clients are told about the Fire Assembly point in the car park.

Farm hazards – There are no slurry pits, accessible farm machinery, rivers or streams on the smallholding. The only water hazards are 3 animal drinking troughs in the main yard. The electric fence is switched off during sessions. There is no exposure to biohazards as no chemicals are kept in the area of the farm used by clients.

Food/picnics – If clients wish to eat or drink on site they can do so in several dedicated spaces which are well away from the animal accommodation.

Clothing – Details of suitable footwear and other clothing are discussed with clients at their initial visit to the farm and include robust footwear, and restricting jewellery as far as possible.

Weather conditions – Prevailing weather conditions often affect the behaviour of animals, as well as the comfort of clients, and these are taken into consideration. Adjustments may need to be made to session plans in certain circumstances.

Policy Reviews - All elements of this Health & Safety policy are regularly review, at least annually, but sometimes more often.