



Points to consider when planning to start up your own  
school farm

What type of animals are you interested in starting with and does anyone in your setting have any previous experience of keeping that animal?

Your setting has a responsibility to ensure that the animals you decide to home are able to express their natural behaviour in accordance with the "Five Freedoms".

***Freedom from Thirst, Hunger and Malnutrition.***

All livestock should have fresh, clean and easily accessible drinking water available to them at all times.

They should have a nutritionally well balanced diet available to them, suitable to their type, age, weight and condition.

The cloven hoofed animals (goats/sheep) should have access for all or part of the year, to areas for grazing/foraging.

***Freedom from Discomfort***

All animals should be provided with housing appropriate to its type, size and temperament.

The housing should be draught proof, waterproof and well ventilated.

The housing should be kept clean and supplied with appropriate clean bedding.

### ***Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease***

All livestock should be monitored daily to ensure their state of health and well being and that they are behaving normally.

If an animal gives cause for concern, or is unwell then appropriate treatment should be given or the advice of a vet sought.

Animals should be examined by a vet if such action is deemed necessary.

Records should be kept of any medication administered and any animal movement onto or off the farm premises

### ***Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour***

The livestock's environment should enable them to fulfil their normal behavioural needs (e.g. scratching, stretching, dust bathing).

Wherever possible animals should be kept in groups of two or more, or if it is not possible, then housed within sight and sound of other animals.

### ***Freedom from Fear and Distress***

Visitors, children within the school and specific children who are caring for the animals must not mishandle the livestock.

Unnecessary force must NOT be used when handling the animals.

### **Other questions to consider**

- What type of housing will the animal require?
- What are the cost implications of buying the animal/feed/bedding/shelter/vets bills etc?
- How will you sustain these costs over time?

- Do the animals you intend to keep need to be registered with DEFRA? (goats, sheep and pigs are required by LAW to be registered with them, due to concerns re Avian flu they like chicken owners to register with them too but it is not mandatory).
- How do you apply for a holding number?
- Who will look after the day to day care of the animals?
- Who will oversee the care of the animals during school holidays?
- Do you intend to raise animals for meat? if so how will you arrange collection and slaughter of the animal and who will then prepare the meat joints?
- Have you got adequate storage for meat joints before they can be sold on to interested buyers?
- Do you have a realistic budget and plan in place before buying the animal?
- You need a basic knowledge of the legal paperwork that you are required to keep by DEFRA.
- How will you explain to the children about illness or death of an animal?
- How will you afford the costs of the upkeep of the animals and farm fencing/paddocks etc?
- Have you got a good vet nearby who can provide care for large animals and who can be flexible about payment? (not insisting on payment for example during the school holidays when the school office isn't open to process cheques)
- Have you got a support network of parents/local community who will provide practical help?
- Have you got a responsible adult who is prepared to be the named person on all DEFRA paperwork? If there's a problem they could be held liable under law because they have submitted and signed the paperwork?

- Do you know exactly how much space each animal requires there are regulations to adhere to? (All this info can be found on the DEFRA website under the farm animals codes of practice documents)
- What animals require particular inoculation? (is your setting in a blue tongue area etc.)
- Have you got access to suitable training/mentor schools who can advise you during the initial start up process?

Compiled by Trish Gilbert

HLTA with responsibility for School Farm and Animals

