

NOTES ON THE CONTROL MEASURES FOR AVOIDANCE OF ILL HEALTH DUE TO CONTACT WITH E. COLI 0157

INTRODUCTION

1. E. coli is a bacterium, many strains (or types) of which live harmlessly in the guts of humans and animals.
2. Strains such as E. coli 0157 produce toxins or poisons, which can cause illness in humans. E. coli is highly infectious and can present a serious health hazard.
3. Cattle, sheep, deer and goats excrete the bacteria.
4. E.coli 0157 can persist in the soil for up to 150 days and in cattle faeces for up to 90 days.

INFECTION

5. The risk of infection comes mainly from contact with animals or their faeces eg when eating or drinking when camping or picnicking without washing their hands. Even tiny amounts of E. coli can pose a severe risk, particularly for young children and elderly people.
6. Another source of infection is drinking from streams that may have been contaminated with animal faeces without first treating the water.
7. It is highly unlikely that the water supply on farms etc can be contaminated.

PRECAUTIONS

8. When planning to rally on farmland which has been used for grazing or stock holding of animals, request that:
 - Farm animals are kept off the fields for three weeks prior to and during the event.
 - All visible dung/faeces are removed, preferably at the beginning of the three week period.
 - The grass is mown and kept short and clippings removed before the fields are used for recreation.

NB These are part of the advice given to farmers by the Health and Safety Executive.

9. Check if the water supply is provided from either a Water Company or a Borehole. If it is from a Borehole ask to see the results of the test or the local authority certificate declaring it safe to use.
10. Farmers have a duty to carry out a COSHH assessment re E. coli among other things. Why not ask for a copy?

CONTROLLING THE RISK

- Do not drink from rivers or streams.
- Ensure that animals have not been in contact with the water taps eg taps for water troughs.
- Avoid contact with animals wherever possible.
- Avoid walking through areas contaminated with faeces or slurry liquid wherever possible.
- Keep out of areas not allocated to the rally.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking etc.
- Clean off clothing, footwear or any items carried, which may have been in contact with the ground.

Following these simple precautions will not only limit the risk from E. coli, but also of other diseases that can be transmitted to people from animals.