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Health Protection Newsletter

Advice to Pregnant Women to Avoid Close Contact with Birthing Animals

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pregnancy-advice-on-contact-with-animals-that-are-giving-birth>

In order to protect their own health and that of their unborn child, women who are, or who may be, pregnant should be advised to avoid close contact with livestock animals.

This is because infectious organisms may be present in birth fluids of animals, particularly sheep, cattle and goats. Such organisms may result in infections such as chlamydiosis, listeriosis, Q fever and toxoplasmosis.



Different animal species are involved which give birth at different times of the year, meaning that the risks are not only confined to the spring when the majority of lambs are born.

Although these infections are uncommon, and the number of human pregnancies affected by contact with sheep is extremely small, it is important that pregnant women are made aware of the potential risks in order to safeguard their health and that of their unborn baby.

If you have something you would like to add to a upcoming feature of our newsletter please feel free to get in touch via email or phone listed above!

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Prevention of infection

To avoid the possible risk of infection, pregnant women should:

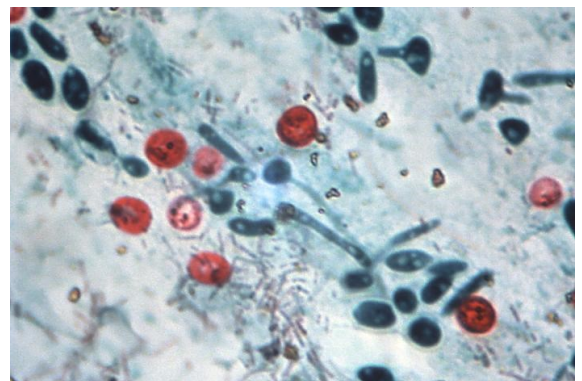
- not help ewes to lamb, or provide assistance to a cow that is calving or a nanny goat that is kidding.
- avoid contact with aborted or new-born lambs, calves or kids or with the afterbirth, birthing fluids or materials such as bedding contaminated by such birth products.
- avoid handling or washing clothing, boots or any materials that may have come into contact with animals that have recently given birth, their young or afterbirths, potentially contaminated clothing will be safe to handle after being washed on a hot cycle
- ensure that contacts or partners who have attended animals giving birth take appropriate health and hygiene precautions. This includes wearing personal protective equipment and clothing and adequate washing to remove any potential contamination

Pregnant women should be advised to seek medical advice if they experience fever or influenza-like symptoms, or if they are concerned that they could have acquired infection from a farm environment.

Farmers and livestock keepers have a responsibility to minimise the risks to pregnant women, including members of their family, the public and professional staff visiting farms.

CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS

Cryptosporidia are protozoan host-adapted parasites, which usually cause an acute self – limiting diarrhoeal illness in people and animals. In Grampian we generally see an increase in cases of cryptosporidiosis around April and May. This occurs in conjunction with the lambing and birthing of other farm animals. It is important to remember to wash your hands with running water and liquid soap, and launder clothing in hot water if you are working with birthing animals or animals that have recently given birth. It is also important to remember to take these steps if you are visiting a farm. In the past we have had outbreaks of Cryptosporidiosis in children that have visited farms on school trips where they were introduced to newly born lambs and calves. It is also important to remember if you or your child have a diarrhoeal illness you should not go swimming in a communal swimming pool until your symptoms have fully resolved (without the use of anti-diarrhoeal medications) and it has been 48 hours since your last loose stool.



Cryptosporidium oocysts stained in red from a faecal smear.

WHO AND ETAGE RECOGNISE UK HEP B TARGETS

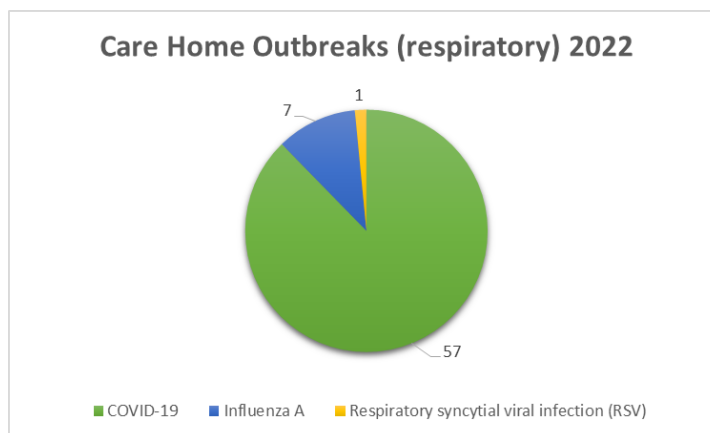
Recently the WHO and Professor Adam Finn, Chair of the European Technical Advisory Group of Experts (ETAGE), wrote to acknowledge the United Kingdom's achievement of regional hepatitis B control targets set by the Action Plan for the Health Sector Response to Viral Hepatitis in the WHO European Region. The United Kingdom has implemented universal infant vaccination against hepatitis B since 2017 and consistently reported high vaccination coverage. Our country has also demonstrated effective prevention of perinatal transmission of hepatitis B by implementing universal screening of pregnant women, giving antiviral treatment to those who were infected and had high viral loads, and providing postexposure prophylaxis to children born to infected mothers. The results of prenatal screening in the past three years suggest that hepatitis B prevalence remains at the low level (0.5%). This a great and commendable achievement for everyone who has worked to hit these targets and although the work continues it is worth pausing to recognise the work that has been undertaken to reach these goals.

TIPS AND OTHER NEWS

Care Homes: It is important to remember to PCR test residents that have respiratory symptoms. Although COVID –19 is still dominant in the last year we have also had outbreaks of **Flu** and **RSV**.

The guidance below has been updated and can be found using the link below.

[COVID-19 - information and guidance for social, community, residential care and prison settings](#)



General: It is also important to remember that NHS Inform has a huge amount of information and has helpful guides if you get symptoms. The COVID-19 information is still on NHS Inform and is up to date including stay at home advice.

[NHS Inform - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)