# Cryptosporidium outbreak linked to Cowbridge Farm shop hospitalises 16 amid farm visit hygiene warnings



Parents of a four-year-old boy have recounted their distressing experience as their son fell seriously ill during a family holiday abroad after visiting a petting farm. Their ordeal is part of a wider public health investigation into an outbreak of cryptosporidium linked to Cowbridge Farm Shop at Marlborough Grange Farm in Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan. Health officials are currently examining 74 reported cases connected to visits to this farm in April, with 16 individuals hospitalised at least overnight due to their symptoms.

Cryptosporidium is a parasite often transmitted through contact with young farm animals, leading to gastrointestinal distress including severe diarrhoea and vomiting. While the illness can be dangerous, especially for vulnerable populations, it is typically not life-threatening for healthy individuals. Nonetheless, the ramifications can be severe for those affected, as illustrated by the parents' account of their son's painful symptoms.

Public Health Wales (PHW) is actively reminding the public about the importance of hygiene when visiting farm attractions. The agency highlights that rigorous handwashing after interacting with animals is crucial to prevent infections. This preventive message has gained urgency in light of recent outbreaks not only in Cowbridge but also in other areas of Wales.

For instance, in Cwmbran, four confirmed cases of cryptosporidium have emerged, further implicating the risks associated with young animals at community farms. Individuals involved in activities such as bottle-feeding lambs and goats are particularly susceptible due to the close contact with these young animals, underscoring the need for enhanced hygiene measures. The advice to wash hands thoroughly after such engagements has been a significant emphasis from health officials.

Furthermore, the situation is exacerbated by similar incidents elsewhere, notably at Gannow Farm in Worcestershire, where numerous visitors fell ill following a visit. Investigations confirmed that these cases were also linked to cryptosporidium, prompting the farm to close its animal experiences for the remainder of the 2024 season. Families impacted by this outbreak have begun legal consultations to seek accountability and potential compensation for their suffering.

Authorities have noted that the outbreaks at various farms highlight a growing concern regarding health and safety at agricultural attractions. Researchers pointed to a large cryptosporidium outbreak in the south-west of England, where specific interactions with lambs heightened the risk of infection. Such studies emphasise the need for ongoing vigilance and public education concerning the risks associated with animal contact.

As the investigations continue across multiple locations, the call for responsible practices in farm visits is more pressing than ever. Public health officials are not only working to manage these outbreaks but are also striving to educate families on safe practices that can mitigate the risks of these harmful infections. The ongoing situation serves as a reminder of both the joys and hazards present at petting farms, where the thrill of animal encounters must be balanced with an understanding of health risks.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: (1)
2. Paragraph 2: (1), (4)
3. Paragraph 3: (2), (4)
4. Paragraph 4: (3), (5), (6)
5. Paragraph 5: (7)
6. Paragraph 6: (1), (4)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cewd14jvgewo> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-17707165> - Health officials are investigating an outbreak of the cryptosporidium parasite at a community farm in Cwmbran, Torfaen. Four people have tested positive for the parasite, and a further 13 possible cases have been identified. All those affected had been bottle-feeding lambs and goats. The bug can lead to sickness and diarrhoea but is rarely a serious condition for healthy individuals. Public Health Wales advises that good hygiene practices, such as thorough hand washing after contact with farm animals, are essential in preventing infection.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cydrp4lmyjjo> - Gannow Farm in Worcestershire has confirmed an outbreak of a sickness bug following reports from visitors who became unwell after visiting. Environmental Health officers diagnosed the outbreak as Cryptosporidium. The farm has closed its animal experiences for the remainder of the 2024 season and is cooperating with investigations to determine the source of the illness. Cryptosporidium is a parasite that causes diarrhoea and can be transmitted through contact with infected animals or their environment.
* <https://phw.nhs.wales/news/cryptosporidium-and-open-farms/> - Public Health Wales is reminding visitors to farm attractions of the importance of washing their hands after contact with animals. Since April, several cases of diarrhoea potentially linked to visits to open farms have been investigated, with Cryptosporidium identified as the cause. The parasite can be transmitted through contact with infected animals or their environment. Public Health Wales emphasizes the need for thorough hand hygiene to prevent infection.
* <https://www.irwinmitchell.com/news-and-insights/newsandmedia/2024/april/more-than-20-people-instruct-lawyers-after-falling-seriously-ill-following-worcestershire-farm-visit> - More than 20 people have instructed lawyers to investigate after falling seriously ill following a visit to Gannow Farm in Worcestershire. The group, including parents and children as young as one, experienced severe sickness and diarrhoea, with many diagnosed with the parasitic infection Cryptosporidium. Families are seeking answers and potential compensation for the impact on their health and well-being.
* <https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4197526/farm-closes-visitors-report-unwell-easter-period> - Gannow Farm in Worcestershire has closed its animal experiences after visitors reported becoming unwell following a visit over the Easter period. The farm confirmed that Environmental Health officers diagnosed the infection as Cryptosporidium. The farm has ceased its lambing, calving, piglet, and alpaca experiences for the remainder of the 2024 season and is cooperating with investigations to determine the source of the illness.
* <https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2024/08/animal-contact-linked-to-large-cryptosporidium-outbreak/> - Researchers have detailed one of the largest Cryptosporidium outbreaks in England in recent years, associated with a multi-day lamb petting event in the south-west of England in 2023. The outbreak investigation found 23 laboratory-confirmed primary Cryptosporidium parvum cases, with individuals who held or cuddled a lamb within a pen being more likely to develop cryptosporidiosis-like illness. The study highlights the risks associated with animal contact at visitor attractions and the importance of preventive measures.