

School trust fined after failing to control the disease risk from animals

The Spencer Academies Trust has been fined after failing to control the risk to humans from infectious diseases carried by animals.

Southern Derbyshire Magistrates' Court heard how the Trust, which operates 12 schools, failed to properly control the risk from zoonotic diseases to employees, pupils and visitors at one of its academies. The academy school was home to several animals including goats, pigs and rabbits.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the trust had failed to provide adequate washing facilities to control the risks of disease to employees, pupils and visitors to the academy. The academy had also failed to provide suitable housing for the animals to minimise the risk to children as well as adequate training for staff.

The Spencer Academies Trust, Arthur Mee Road, Stapleford, Nottingham, pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £20,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £7,304.10 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Leigh Stanley said: "HSE recognise the wider learning benefits from keeping animals in the school environment, however, schools must ensure that the risks of zoonotic diseases are adequately assessed and effectively controlled. This includes adequate supervision and washing facilities. In this case, the Trust failed to implement suitable arrangements which meant that there was a significant risk to the health of people including the children."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Link to industry code of practice which details what animal visitor attractions should be considering when keeping animals
<http://www.visitmyfarm.org/component/k2/339-industry-code-of-practice/339-industry-code-of-practice>