

Health and Safety Guide: Farmstay Program

By federal law, all farmstay placements, in order to be done without a work permit, must be done at small, “family” farms. These are farms which do not regularly employ staff, and therefore, in most cases do not have established HR or health and safety policies for volunteers. Because of these, there are added health and safety concerns for farmstays, and any new farmstay host should be asked to review the following health and safety policies, and complete a health and safety questionnaire.

As part of the farmstay host recruitment policy, we ask that all farmstay hosts meet and follow the following minimum standards and requirements:

- Farm structures
 - The farmstay volunteer must be given an orientation of the farm, introducing them to all structures and indicating any ‘no go’ areas.
 - The volunteer should be shown the extent of any electrical fencing and be instructed to stay at least 2 metres away from it at all times
 - If there is a barn on site, the volunteer should be shown how to safely enter and exit hay lofts, and at the discretion of the host, the volunteer can be prohibited from entering a hay loft.
 - The volunteer should be shown how to safely enter, exit and secure animal pens.
 - The volunteer should be shown the location of first aid kits, and fire extinguishers, and should be given information on who to contact in case of injury or fire.
- Environment
 - The volunteer should be given a tour of the property to help them understand any potential hazards such as rivers, cliffs, and caves.
 - The volunteer should be shown any vegetation which can cause, itching, burning, or other negative reactions.
 - Volunteers should be given time to acclimatize themselves to the local environment. If the temperature at the farm is 25 degrees celsius or above, the volunteer’s outdoor work should be phased in incrementally over 1 week. With the first day, the volunteer being exposed to no more than 2 hours per day of outdoor work. The next day this can be increased, and this can continue over the course of the week until they volunteer is fully acclimatized. In colder environments, where the temperature is at or below 0 degrees celsius a similar acclimatization process should be undertaken.
 - At times when the humidex is above 30 degrees celsius, the volunteer’s working hours should be limited, and the host should monitor them for signs of dehydration, exhaustion, heat rash or heat stroke. The host should ensure the

volunteer is aware of the importance of staying hydrated, and the volunteer should be made aware of where they can easily access cold water. Volunteers should not be asked to work outdoors when the humidex or air temperature is 40 degrees or above. Volunteers should have access to an outdoor thermometer to monitor conditions. For more information on managing heat stress, please see: http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/gl_heat.php

- At times when the windchill or air temperature is below -10 degrees celsius, the volunteer's working hours and outdoor work should be limited, and the host should monitor them for signs of frostbite. Volunteers should also be given a 'warm-up' schedule, allowing for 5-minute intervals of warming at least once every 2 hours. Volunteers should not be asked to work outdoors when the windchill or air temperature is below -30 degrees celsius. For more information on working in cold weather, and warming schedules, please see: <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/work/safety-in-the-workplace/safety-standards-and-alerts/working-outdoors#working-in-cold-conditions>
- Chemicals and pesticides
 - The volunteer should have no contact with pesticides.
 - The volunteer may have access to chemicals such as varnish, wood finish, and paint, but must be informed of safe handling rules, and must work in a well ventilated area
- Livestock, animals and wildlife
 - The volunteer should be informed of any known locations of ticks, poisonous snakes and other dangerous wildlife, and be told to avoid those areas.
 - During their first week on the farm, the volunteer should be given the opportunity to acclimatize to the livestock. This includes shadowing the farmstay host as they tend to animals and enter animal pens. The volunteer should not be asked to enter any animal pen on their own for the first week.
 - Volunteers should be told how to behave around animals and what to do if they feel uncomfortable with how an animal is behaving.
 - Volunteers must not be permitted to work alone with cows, bison, horses, or other large animals.
- Farm equipment
 - The volunteer should have no contact with tractors, combines, and other heavy machinery. When machinery is in use, the volunteer should be kept at least 5 meters away.
 - The volunteer may have supervised access to handheld farm equipment such as scythes, clippers, shears, shovels, hoes, rakes, and hoses.
 - The volunteer should be informed of any potential hazards from the above equipment.
 - Repetitive work with any equipment should be limited to two hours at a time.

- The farmstay host should provide the volunteer with any protective device they need to perform their tasks. This can include such items as gloves, goggles, insect repellent, and face masks.
- Physical Stress
 - Volunteers should be closely monitored when doing work that requires bending, pulling or lifting, and be instructed on methods for safely undertaking these activities.
 - Physically demanding work should be limited to no more than 2 hours at a time, with mandatory breaks between episodes of physical labour.
- Right to Refuse Work
 - The volunteer has the obligation to refuse any duties which they feel are unsafe, or that they are not able to do safely.
 - If a volunteer refuses a duty, both they and the host should inform Experience Education of this in writing within 24 hours.
- Volunteer Obligations
 - Before arriving at the farmstay, the volunteer must:
 - provide the farmstay host with a copy of their private health insurance.
 - provide the farmstay host with an emergency contact number for their next of kin.
 - disclose to the farmstay host any allergies or physical challenges which may impact their work.

Farmstay Assessment - Health and Safety Questionnaire

Each farmstay host must complete an online assessment of health and safety on the farm. The farmstay participant will have access to this assessment. The assessment can be found at www.experienceeducation.ca/health/farmstay