

Millennium Farm Trust

GN18 Adverse Weather Policy

Next review date Feb 2025



Version Control

Version number	Date of changes	Who	Review summary
01	Feb 20	T Freathy	Scheduled review. No changes
	Feb 23	T Freathy	Scheduled review. No changes

Introduction

All Millennium Farm Trust employees have a duty to make every reasonable effort to report for work on time each day that they are contracted to work. Farm helpers are also expected to make every effort to attend their working days. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions when weather conditions are so severe that some employees or farm helpers will either be prevented from attending for work on the farm, will be late and/or need to leave work early. This policy should be followed in such circumstances and aims to ensure that staff who are unable to attend work, despite their best efforts, are treated fairly and consistently.

This policy also sets out the policy and procedures when severe weather forces the farm to temporarily close. Where closure extends over a long period (more than 3 days, this policy should be read in conjunction with Gn17 Business Continuity Plan.

Policy Statement

This policy considers the effects adverse weather has on individuals (either Farm Helpers or Staff), which means there may be times where adverse weather affects only a proportion of the people at the farm. Weather that may affect an individual employee's ability to attend work at the farm includes:

- storms, high winds and gales;
- prolonged or heavy snowfall and blizzards;
- ice and hard thick frosts;
- flooding,
- extremes of temperature;
- or dense fog.

Nonattendance by Employees

All employees are expected to anticipate problems arising due to adverse weather conditions and make every reasonable effort to report for work at their usual start time even when their normal transport arrangements have or may be disrupted. This includes making alternative transport arrangements to

ensure that they can attend each day. Fortunately, Depden Care Farm is situated on a main road (A143) opposite a Council road salt depot. It is therefore always one of the first roads to be cleared and is kept clear throughout bad weather incidents. Even when minor roads are closed, our road will usually be open.

It is considered appropriate for staff to walk a reasonable distance to their place of work or nearest available public transport where they may not normally do so, giving regard to the nature and distance of the route, prevailing weather conditions, physical fitness and any disabling medical condition. On no account should staff place themselves at risk.

Staff must not anticipate office closures based on third party announcements such as radio or television broadcasts, announcements by other employers, rumours from colleagues or generalised advice from the police to the effect that only essential journeys should be made.

Nonattendance by Farm Helpers

Farm Helpers and their carers are also expected to anticipate problems arising due to adverse weather conditions and make every reasonable effort to report for work on the farm where their diagnosis and health ensures it is safe to do so.

Closure of the farm

When adverse weather means that the Health and Safety of Farm Helpers or staff on the farm are significantly compromised and the impacts of severe weather on people cannot be mitigated, the farm will be closed to farm helpers. The decision to close the farm will be made by the Director in discussion with the staff. Staff may still be required to attend for work, if they are able, in order to manage the livestock.

Reporting

Staff

If an employee anticipates being late or cannot reach work because of adverse weather conditions they must telephone the Director or other appropriate senior manager at Depden Care Farm as soon as possible and before their contracted start time. The employee must explain their situation, providing information where required and will receive instructions on the course of action to be followed in the circumstances. Text messages or telephone calls from third parties are not considered a suitable contact method. Should an employee's ability to attend work be affected by adverse weather for more than one working day they must report to their manager on each working day affected before their contracted start time.

Farm Helpers

Where it is deemed not possible or safe for a farm helper to attend farm they or their carers should inform the farm by telephone or email as soon as the decision not to attend is made.

Closing the farm

The Director and or staff will telephone all farm helpers, or their home carers where known, to inform them of the decision to close the farm as soon as the decision has been made.

Staff Pay and Farm Helper Fees

Note that should a farm helper choose not to attend the farm due to a severe weather event but the farm remains open, the attendance fee will be charged. If the farm is closed to farm helpers due severe weather, no fee will be charged.

Lateness or non-attendance by staff

Where attendance proves unachievable an employee should speak directly to their manager before the scheduled start time, explaining the situation and bringing issues relevant to that day's work to their attention. Absence where an employee has failed to notify their manager will be regarded as unauthorised absence and the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees who do not report for duty due to adverse weather conditions are not automatically entitled to payment for such absences. MFT shall however have the discretion to authorise leave with or without pay if they are fully satisfied with the employee's explanation for non-attendance. In coming to such a decision MFT will give due regard to the matters covered above.

In these circumstances employees are not automatically entitled to payment for such absences. The Director, on behalf of MFT shall however have the discretion to authorise leave with or without pay if they are fully satisfied with the employee's explanation for reporting to work late or being absent. In coming to such a decision the Director will give due regard to:

- the position of other employees residing in the same general area;
- the availability of public transport;
- the distance from home to the usual workplace;
- any advice given by the relevant authorities (e.g. West Suffolk Council, police)
- the timing of the employee's contact with their manager

Should MFT decide to close the farm for part or all of the working day, all employees on rota that day will be paid their normal contracted hours.

Deterioration of weather whilst at work and closure of workplace

Where weather conditions show signs of worsening, employees may request to leave early or MFT may have to close the farm in the interests of staff and/or farm helper safety. In doing so, MFT will give regard to;

- the actual and forecast weather conditions,
- availability of public transport,
- road conditions,
- up to date police advice,
- the employee's or farm helper's journey home, as well as any other relevant circumstances.

Should an employee request to leave the workplace early due to worsening weather conditions to allow for their safe journey home they will not be automatically entitled to payment for such absences. MFT shall however have the discretion to authorise leave with or without pay if they are fully satisfied with the employee's circumstances.

Care of dependants

Where weather conditions affect the care of an employee's dependant(s), for example the closure of schools or access by carers and if no immediate alternative arrangements can be made, employees must notify the Director or senior staff member of their non-attendance or request to leave the office early. Employees in these circumstances will not automatically be entitled to payment for such absences. The Director shall however have the discretion to authorise leave with or without pay if they are fully satisfied with the employee's explanation. Any time off for the emergency care of dependants must be reasonable in the circumstances and is for the emergency care of the dependant only; therefore alternative arrangements for their on-going care must be made at the earliest opportunity.

Avoidance of loss of pay

As stated above it is MFT policy to authorise leave with or without pay on a discretionary basis. Due to the nature of exercising discretion and its basis on an employee's individual circumstances MFT anticipates that leave may be granted to some employees and not others, depending on circumstances. This is viewed as the fairest arrangement in the circumstances and should an employee be unhappy with MFT's decision they are referred to the Grievance Procedure.

Should MFT decide not to provide paid leave the employee will be allowed to avoid loss by taking annual leave for the day(s) lost. Should the employee have exhausted their annual leave entitlement for the current year, the Director has the discretion to agree for annual leave to be taken from the following year's entitlement or working back the lost time.