

Millennium Farm Trust

GN1.4 Lone Working Policy V03

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Version Control

Version number	Date of changes	Who	Review summary
02	03/07/2020	T Freathy	Annual review. No changes
02	April 2024	T Freathy	Scheduled review. No changes
03	July 2026	T Freathy	Updated to reflect regular weekend animal-care arrangements, risk assessment, competency, prohibited activities and check-in/check-out procedures.

1. Purpose

Millennium Farm Trust (MFT) recognises that some work at Depden Care Farm is undertaken by people working alone.

Lone working is not in itself prohibited. However, working without close or direct supervision can increase risk because assistance may not be immediately available if an accident, illness, emergency or other unexpected event occurs.

MFT will therefore ensure that lone working is undertaken only where the activity has been assessed as suitable, the person is competent to undertake it and appropriate communication and emergency arrangements are in place.

2. Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers and other people authorised by MFT to undertake work alone.

For the purposes of this policy, a **lone worker** is someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision.

Lone working may include:

- Weekend or out-of-hours animal feeding and welfare checks.
- Opening or closing the site.
- Routine office or administrative work.
- Routine low-risk maintenance or horticultural tasks.
- Other specifically authorised activities which have been assessed as suitable for lone working.

Farm Helpers and children or young people under the age of 18 must not work alone at Depden Care Farm.

A person aged 18 or over who is employed by MFT may undertake approved lone-working duties where they have been assessed as competent and the requirements of this policy are met.

3. Principles

MFT will:

1. Avoid lone working where the risk cannot be adequately controlled.
2. Assess whether the work is suitable to be undertaken alone.
3. Consider the competence, experience and needs of the individual undertaking the work.
4. Clearly identify activities which must not be undertaken alone.
5. Ensure lone workers have an effective means of communication.
6. Maintain arrangements for knowing when a lone worker is on site and when they have finished.
7. Have an agreed response where a lone worker fails to make expected contact.
8. Ensure lone workers understand emergency procedures and the limits of the work they are authorised to undertake.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Director

The Director is responsible for ensuring that:

- Lone-working risks are appropriately assessed.
- Activities suitable and unsuitable for lone working are identified.
- People undertaking lone work are appropriately competent and authorised.
- Appropriate communication and monitoring arrangements are maintained.
- Emergency procedures are established.
- Lone-working arrangements are reviewed following any significant incident or change.

4.2 Lone Workers

Anyone working alone must:

- Follow this policy and relevant risk assessments.
- Undertake only activities they are authorised and competent to undertake alone.
- Carry a charged and working mobile phone.
- Follow the agreed check-in and check-out arrangements.
- Remain alert to changing circumstances.
- Stop work where conditions make the activity unsafe.
- Report accidents, incidents, near misses and concerns.
- Contact the emergency services where necessary.

5. Lone Working Risk Assessment

Before an activity is routinely undertaken alone, MFT will consider whether lone working materially increases the risk.

The assessment should consider:

- The nature of the task.
- The location and working environment.
- Animals involved.
- Machinery, vehicles or tools.
- Manual-handling requirements.
- Work at height.
- Hazardous substances.

- Weather and ground conditions.
- Lighting and time of day.
- Access and security.
- Fire and other emergency arrangements.
- Mobile-phone reception.
- The likelihood and consequences of an accident or sudden illness.
- How assistance would be summoned.
- How quickly assistance could reasonably arrive.
- The competence and experience of the individual.

The assessment should also consider whether there are circumstances in which the normally low-risk activity becomes unsuitable for lone working.

6. Competence to Work Alone

Lone working will only be undertaken by a person whom MFT considers competent to carry out the relevant duties safely without direct supervision.

Competence will take account of:

- Experience.
- Training.
- Familiarity with the Farm.
- Knowledge of the animals or tasks involved.
- Ability to recognise hazards.
- Ability to respond appropriately to unexpected situations.
- Understanding of emergency arrangements.
- Ability to use the communication and check-in system.

New employees should not normally undertake lone-working duties until they have worked alongside an experienced member of staff and demonstrated that they can carry out the relevant tasks safely.

Being aged 18 or over does not automatically make someone suitable for lone working.

7. Weekend and Out-of-Hours Animal Care

MFT recognises that animals require care every day and that routine feeding and welfare checks will sometimes be undertaken by a lone member of staff or an appropriately trained employee aged 18 or over.

This is an **authorised lone-working activity**, subject to the relevant risk assessment and the requirements below.

Routine lone animal care may include:

- Feeding and watering.
- Visual welfare checks.
- Opening or closing routine animal areas where assessed as safe.
- Straightforward cleaning or husbandry tasks.
- Reporting concerns about an animal.

The lone worker must not undertake an activity which falls outside the normal routine if doing so introduces a materially greater risk.

For example, if the worker discovers:

- An escaped animal.
- An animal behaving unusually or aggressively.
- A seriously ill or injured animal requiring significant handling.
- Damage to fencing or buildings requiring hazardous repair.

- Flooding, fire, electrical damage or another significant site hazard.
- Severe weather or unsafe ground conditions.
- An unexpected person or security concern.

they should **stop, make the situation safe if this can readily be done without risk, and seek assistance.**

There is no expectation that a lone worker should solve an unexpected problem simply because they are the person on site.

8. Activities Not Normally Permitted When Working Alone

The following activities must not normally be undertaken by a lone worker unless a specific risk assessment has established that suitable alternative controls are in place:

- Operating the tractor or other higher-risk agricultural machinery.
- Using workshop machinery or significant power tools.
- Work at height using ladders or other access equipment.
- Significant or hazardous manual handling.
- Handling an animal known to present a significant risk of injury.
- Attempting to catch or restrain an escaped, distressed or aggressive large animal.
- Significant tree work.
- Building or maintenance work involving significant risk.
- Work involving hazardous substances where emergency assistance may be required.
- Electrical work other than straightforward use of normal equipment.
- Any activity specifically identified by risk assessment as requiring two or more people.

Lone workers must not improvise or undertake an unfamiliar higher-risk task simply because they are already on site.

9. Check-In and Check-Out Procedure

Whenever a person is working alone at Depden Care Farm outside normal operating hours, there must be an agreed **nominated contact**.

Before starting work, the lone worker must ensure that the nominated contact knows:

- That they are working alone at Depden Care Farm.
- Their approximate start time.
- The work they intend to undertake.
- Their expected finish time.

The lone worker must carry a charged mobile phone and keep it readily accessible while working.

At the end of the work, the lone worker must contact the nominated person to confirm that:

they have finished their duties and left, or are about to leave, the Farm safely.

For a short routine weekend animal-care visit, a check-in at the start and check-out at the end will normally be sufficient.

For longer periods of lone working or work presenting increased risk, additional agreed contact during the period may be required.

10. Nominated Contact

The nominated contact does **not** have to be physically present at Depden Care Farm or at Rookery Farm.

They must, however:

- Know that the person is working alone.
- Know their expected finish/check-out time.
- Be contactable during the period concerned.
- Have the lone worker's telephone number.
- Know what action to take if expected contact is not received.

The nominated contact may be the Director, another member of staff or another appropriate person authorised by MFT.

Where somebody is present at Rookery Farm or otherwise close to Depden Care Farm, this provides a useful additional safeguard but **does not replace the formal check-in/check-out arrangement**.

11. Failure to Check Out

If the lone worker has not checked out within the agreed period after their expected finish time, the nominated contact should:

1. Attempt to contact the lone worker by telephone.
2. Make a further attempt after a short interval if there is no response.
3. If contact still cannot be established, arrange for an appropriate person to check the Farm where this can be done safely.
4. Contact the emergency services where:
 - There is reason to believe that an accident or emergency may have occurred;
 - Circumstances make a site check unsafe; or
 - Nobody can reasonably attend the site and there is continuing concern for the lone worker's welfare.

The nominated contact should not place themselves at risk when responding.

The precise escalation arrangements may be proportionate to the activity and circumstances but must be understood by both the lone worker and nominated contact.

12. Communication

Lone workers must carry a charged mobile telephone.

Before lone working is authorised, MFT should be satisfied that there is adequate mobile-phone reception in the areas where the work will normally be undertaken.

Where mobile reception is unreliable, alternative arrangements must be considered.

The phone should be carried **on the person**, rather than left in a vehicle, office or bag some distance from the activity.

Where reasonably practicable, appropriate emergency contact numbers should be stored in the phone.

13. Emergency Arrangements

Lone workers must know:

- The address/location of Depden Care Farm.
- How to contact the emergency services.
- The location of first aid equipment.
- Fire and evacuation procedures.
- Who to contact within MFT.
- What to do if they encounter an unsafe situation.

In an emergency, the lone worker should call **999 or 112** where necessary.

The worker should not delay contacting the emergency services while attempting to contact MFT management.

14. First Aid

The lone-working risk assessment will consider appropriate first-aid arrangements.

Lone workers must have access to suitable first-aid equipment.

People regularly undertaking lone work should receive sufficient information and instruction to respond appropriately to foreseeable minor injuries and to summon assistance for more serious incidents.

Any injury sustained while working alone must be reported through MFT's normal accident and incident-reporting arrangements.

15. Personal Safety and Security

The risk of violence or confrontation during normal out-of-hours Farm duties is considered low, as the Farm is not normally open to the public at these times.

However, the risk is not considered to be zero.

Lone workers should:

- Remain alert to unexpected people or vehicles on site.
- Avoid confrontation.
- Not challenge an intruder where doing so may place them at risk.
- Withdraw to a safe location where necessary.
- Contact the police where there is an immediate threat or suspected crime.
- Report security concerns to the Director.

16. Weather and Environmental Conditions

Lone workers should consider weather and ground conditions before and during the activity.

Particular care may be required during:

- Ice or snow.
- High winds.
- Heavy rain or flooding.
- Extreme heat.
- Darkness or poor visibility.

Where conditions materially increase the risk, the activity should be postponed, adapted or undertaken with another person.

Animal welfare requirements will still need to be met, but this may require alternative staffing arrangements rather than expecting a lone worker to work in unsafe conditions.

17. Medical and Individual Considerations

MFT will consider whether an individual's circumstances affect their ability to work safely alone.

Where there is uncertainty about whether a person's health makes lone working safe, appropriate occupational or medical advice may be sought with the person's knowledge.

Only information necessary to manage the health and safety risk should be requested or shared.

18. Home and Remote Working

Staff undertaking routine administrative work from home are also lone workers, although the risks will generally be different and lower than those associated with practical Farm activities.

Home-working risks will be managed proportionately and may include:

- Display Screen Equipment.
- Workstation arrangements.
- Working hours.
- Communication.
- Wellbeing and isolation.

19. Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

Any accident, incident or significant near miss occurring during lone working must be reported.

Following an incident, MFT will consider whether:

- Lone working contributed to the incident or its consequences.
- The activity remains suitable for lone working.
- Communication arrangements were effective.
- The worker had appropriate training and equipment.
- The risk assessment requires amendment.
- Additional controls or a two-person working arrangement are required.

20. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- GN1 Health and Safety Policy.
- GN1.1 Fire Safety and Fire Risk Management Policy.
- GN1.3 Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse Policy.
- Relevant activity and individual risk assessments.
- Incident Reporting Procedures.
- Relevant Safe Systems of Work.

21. Monitoring and Review

The Director is responsible for monitoring the operation of this policy.

Lone-working arrangements will be reviewed:

- Annually.
- Following a significant accident, incident or near miss.
- Where the activities undertaken alone change.
- Where a new person begins regular lone-working duties.
- Where communication or emergency arrangements change.
- Where experience indicates that existing controls are insufficient.