

Pregnant women advised to avoid animals giving birth

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Pregnant women are advised to avoid close contact with farmed animals that are giving, or have recently given, birth. Infectious diseases sometimes carried by these animals can risk a mother-to-be's health and that of her unborn child.

Avoiding infection

Reports of these infections are extremely rare. But it's important that pregnant women are aware of the potential risks associated with close contact with these animals and that they take precautions.

It's also important to note that the risks:

- are not only during the spring
- are not only associated with sheep – cows and goats that have recently given birth can also carry similar infections

To reduce the possible risk of infection, pregnant women should:

- not help a ewe to lamb
- not provide help with a cow that is calving or a nanny goat that is kidding
- avoid contact with aborted or new-born lambs, calves or kids or with the afterbirth, birthing fluids or materials (for example, bedding) contaminated by such birth products
- avoid handling clothing (including washing), boots or any materials which may have come into contact with animals that have recently given birth, their young or afterbirths (potentially contaminated clothing will be safe to handle after being washed on a hot cycle)
- make sure people they'll be in contact with who have been attending lambing ewes or other animals giving birth take appropriate health and hygiene precautions – this includes the wearing of personal protective equipment and clothing, and adequate washing to remove any potential contamination

Pregnant women should seek medical advice if they experience fever or flu-like symptoms, or if concerned that they could have picked up an infection from a farm environment.

Reducing risks

Farmers and livestock keepers have a responsibility to reduce the risks to pregnant women, including members of their family, the public and professional staff visiting farms.

They should consult their veterinary surgeon about suitable vaccination programmes and any other disease control measures in sheep, cattle and goats.

More useful links

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[Ice weather warning – information and advice](#)

Ice could make surfaces, including untreated roads, pavements and cycle paths, difficult in some areas. Adjust your driving according to the conditions. Reduce your speed and drive with extra care, even when roads have been gritted.

Weather warning

A [weather warning](#) for ice has been sent out by the Met Office.

Weather warnings from the Met Office let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

Plan your journey

You should always plan your journey and check the latest weather and travel advice.

If the conditions are bad or a weather warning is in place, ask yourself whether you really need to travel – or if you can delay your journey until conditions improve.

If you must travel, plan your journey carefully.

Emergency numbers

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901

Report an issue with snow or ice

If you want to report an issue with snow or ice, you can do so online at this link:

Roads information

However carefully you plan your journey, things can go wrong. An accident or bad weather could mean that a road is closed for a time.

You can get up-to-date traffic and roads information at the following link:

School closures

You can find information about school closures at this link:

Public transport

You can find the latest information about bus and rail services on the [Translink website](#).

Local councils

If local council services are affected by adverse weather, the latest information should be available on council websites.

Frozen or burst pipes

There is information about how to reduce the risk of frozen pipes and what to do if a pipe bursts at the following link:

Health advice and checking on elderly or vulnerable people

There is information about keeping warm, staying as healthy as possible, and checking in on elderly or vulnerable relatives, friends and neighbours during

cold weather on this page:

Forests and country parks

You can find updates about forest and country parks on the [forest news and events](#) or [country parks](#) pages.

Power cuts

If adverse weather causes power cuts, you can get the latest information at this link:

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact:

Flooding

If any flooding happens, you can report it by phoning the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100.

There is general flooding advice on this page:

Contact numbers for agriculture or environment issues

If you have concerns about agricultural issues, animal welfare, water pollution, or rural support you can find contact details on the [DAERA website](#).

Drive to suit the conditions

During adverse weather, you should:

- clear ice off all windows, lights, number plate, and vehicle roof before you set off
- make sure the mirrors are clear and windows are de-misted thoroughly
- use at least dipped headlights in poor visibility
- keep well back from the road user in front
- be extra cautious at road junctions where road markings may not be visible
- be prepared for the road conditions to change over relatively short distances

Even after roads have been treated in winter, driving conditions may remain challenging, especially if the road location and layout mean there is a high risk of ice. Be aware that ice forms more easily on:

- hilly or exposed roads
- roads that pass under or over a bridge
- roads shaded by trees or buildings

Try not to brake suddenly in icy conditions – it may lock up the wheels and you could skid.

If you start to skid:

- release the brake pedal fully or ease off the accelerator
- steer into the skid
- as you straighten, steer back along the road

You can find out more about driving in wintry conditions at this link:

Check and service your vehicle

You can reduce your chances of breaking down by [regularly servicing your car](#). You should also:

- top up anti-freeze and screenwash
- check for wear and tear on wiper blades (replace them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows)
- make sure your battery is fully charged (batteries last between two and four years – replace yours if it's no longer reliable)
- keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level and check you have at least 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the breadth of the tread and around the entire circumference
- wipe dirt and spray off headlamps and make sure all bulbs are working

You can find out more on the [vehicle maintenance page](#).

Winter kit

During winter you are advised to carry a winter kit in your vehicle. It should include:

- ice scraper and de-icer
- torch and spare batteries (or a wind-up torch)
- in-car phone charger
- warm clothes and blankets
- high-visibility vest or jacket
- boots
- first aid kit
- jump leads for the car battery
- empty fuel can
- a shovel (if there's a chance of snow)
- road atlas
- sunglasses (the low winter sun and glare off snow can be dazzling)
- two reflective warning triangles

If you're planning a long trip or if severe weather is forecast, you may want to also have in your car:

- any medication you need to take regularly
- food and a thermos with a hot drink

Driving and walking in flooded areas

Do not travel in heavy rainstorms unless absolutely necessary.

In flooded areas, drivers should not:

- enter flood water that is moving or is more than four inches deep
- under any circumstances, drive through fast-flowing water as the car could be swept away

In more shallow but passable water:

- slow down
- avoid creating bow waves which can damage your car engine; and
- remember to test the brakes after leaving the water

Do not attempt to walk through flooded areas. Even shallow water moving fast can sweep you off your feet and there may be hidden dangers such as:

- open drains
- damaged road surfaces
- submerged debris; or
- deep channels which can result in serious injury or, in the worst cases, death

If you do become stranded in flood water and you feel there is a risk to life, dial 999 for emergency assistance.

More useful links

[Check for hallmark before buying precious metal jewellery](#)

Date published: 31 July 2018

You should do some 'hallmarking homework' before buying jewellery described as a precious metal, like gold, silver, platinum or palladium. Any such items must have a hallmark to guarantee its authenticity.

Hallmarks

Jewellers must display a hallmarking notice which shows what markings should be on the jewellery. You should use this notice to check for hallmarks.

Hallmarks are often very small and an eyeglass will be required to see them. Don't be afraid to ask the jeweller to provide you with one.

This could help to make sure that you avoid the disappointment and potential embarrassment of buying jewellery that has not been accurately described or has a counterfeit hallmark.

Take time when buying something that expensive – don't feel under pressure. Buying a ring without a hallmark may mean that you are not getting what you pay for.

Jewellers must also display prices for jewellery on sale. You should be able to see how much an item costs without seeking help. The only exemptions to this are any items of jewellery, precious metal, or watches displayed in a jeweller's window with a selling price of more than £3,000.

Report un-hallmarked jewellery

If you are aware of un-hallmarked jewellery being offered for sale you should [report it to Consumerline online](#) or by phone on 0300 600 62 62.

More useful links

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[Be aware of cancer signs and symptoms](#)

Date published: 04 February 2019

It's important to be cancer aware, to know what signs and symptoms to look out for and to get yourself checked if you notice anything which could point towards the disease. Speak to your GP if you experience any symptoms.

Vital to detect cancer early

Detecting [cancer](#) early increases the chances of successful treatment.

With advances in treatment and care over recent years, there is often a lot that can be done to tackle cancer.

But fear of what the doctor might find or feeling embarrassment about symptoms causes some people to put off getting checked.

Set these concerns aside and speak to your GP if you have any signs or symptoms.

Signs and symptoms

Some of the common signs and symptoms you should ask your doctor to check out include:

- coughing up blood or blood-stained phlegm (sputum)
- blood in urine
- blood mixed through a bowel motion
- a change in bowel habit that lasts for more than six weeks
- starting to bleed again after the menopause
- unexplained, significant weight loss (5kg/ 10lbs over a couple of months)
- a lump anywhere on your body
- changes on your skin or to an existing mole (such as itching, bleeding or a change in shape or colour)
- a sore that doesn't heal
- symptoms that refuse to clear up, for example a cough or hoarseness that lasts for more than three weeks
- mouth ulcers that have not healed after three weeks
- food regularly seeming to stick on the way down when you swallow

You can find out more, including what to do if you're concerned, at the following links:

Reducing the risk

There are many things that you can do to reduce the risk, such as:

- if you [smoke](#), stop
- keep the amount of [alcohol](#) you drink within safe limits
- take regular exercise and aim to keep your weight within the recommended BMI range
- avoid getting [sunburn](#) – use sunscreen and a hat and don't use [sunbeds](#)

As well as being aware of signs and symptoms at all times, you should go for cancer screening if you are invited.

More useful links

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[Variety of opportunities at Belfast job fair](#)

A job fair is taking place at the Europa Hotel in Belfast on Wednesday 7 February. It brings employers, support organisations and jobseekers together under one roof. The event runs from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm and admission is free.

Employment opportunities

The job fair has something for everyone and anyone, whether in work, unemployed or simply considering education and training options.

More than 75 employers will take part, including representatives from healthcare, manufacturing, IT, customer services and many more.

A number of advice and training organisations, including the Careers Service and Job Search Services will also be there.

Advice and guidance will be available on a range of training and re-skilling opportunities.

You can find out more at the link below:

Anyone in the market for a new career – or looking for the first step on the ladder – then the job fair is the place to be.

More useful links

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