

EDUCATION POLICY

LAST REVISED: JULY 2024



OUR AIMS

Through a combination of hands on learning opportunities, play and discovery, observation, and outreach programmes, Heads of Ayr Farm Park aims to increase the understanding of and responsibility for local and global animal species and conservation for visitors of all ages.

"The public affects the success or failure of environmental management efforts. Public opposition can prevent the implementation of plans to manage natural resources, and public collaboration can be key to success." (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2000)

We recognize the need for change in environmental education across the globe and fully appreciate how important farm, zoos, and other animal attractions can be in promoting knowledge across several areas including species extinction, sustainability, and biodiversity. By providing our visitors with a number of different educational opportunities, we hope to inspire learning about the species we have on offer and encourage the public to make positive environmental changes and improve their sustainability at home and in schools. With over 175,000 visitors to the park each year, we believe the smallest changes per individual can make a tremendous impact on our local environment, with the potential to inspire a need for improvement on a larger scale.

WHAT WE OFFER

Our animals are the heart and soul of Heads of Ayr Farm Park and their wellbeing is our top priority. They are not only our main attraction, but the key to conservation education for our visitors. We have over 80 different species of animals, ranging from common, domestic farm animals (goats, donkeys, horses) to exotic and endangered species (lemurs, monkeys, camels) to reptiles (snakes, water dragons) and to insects and minibeasts.

For our visitors to make the most of their trip to the park and learn as much as possible relating to the animals, we offer the following as standard:

- Educational signage at every animal enclosure. Each sign includes both the common and scientific animal names, some information about their natural habitat, their conservation status, and some additional facts usually relating to diet or behavior.

- Themed exhibits as close to natural habitat as possible
- Animals are active, healthy, and participate in natural behaviours
- Animal Handling Sessions with one of our Keepers in Little Critters Animal Barn
- Keeper Talks during feeding demonstrations with our otters and ring-tailed lemurs where visitors can participate in a question and answer session about the animals.
- Low-level viewing enclosures wherever possible for visitors to come face-to-face with the animals
- The chance to feed our farm animals (sheep, goats, donkeys, etc)
- Quiz cards to answer when touring the park
- Downloadable activities
- Level access enclosures for wheelchairs and mobility scooters to ensure all animals are accessible to all visitors
- No time restrictions on tickets for visitors to stay for as long as they like

As conservation is also one of our top priorities, we also offer the following to help educate our visitors:

- General signage around the park to cover conservation and sustainability topics including encouraging wildlife to your garden, insect and bee hotels, promoting shopping locally, sites of scientific interest, etc.
- Promotion of animal facts, images, and conservation information on our social media pages
- Encouraging local action by promoting and practicing sustainability, including operating a red bed water waste system, a biomass boiler system, recycling, promoting local suppliers, reducing plastic usage, etc.
- On special event days, we often host outside specialists and educators to lead animal or conservation-based activities including the RSPB.

FORMAL EDUCATION VISITS

We are currently in the process of developing new topics, tours, and resources for schools and nurseries who visit us. Currently our educational trips are teacher-led, with the option to book a tour/talk if required. The tours cover a range of different areas including the following for various different age ranges:

AGES 3-6	AGES 6-8	AGES 8-12	AGES 13+
Discovering Animals Farmyard Fun Jumping Jungle	Habitats Identifying Animals Creepy Crawlies	The Rainforest Endangered Animals	Conservation Education Tourism

In these education sessions, we will provide tours of the animals, handling sessions (where appropriate), learning group activities, the chance to see animal biofacts, worksheets, and more.

INSIDE THE PARK

Schools and organized groups make up approximately 20,000 of our visitors per year. We aim to keep increasing this number every season. For organized groups of over 15 people or more, we currently offer the following:

- Free teacher planning visits
- Discounted admission rates with additional free adult places
- Downloadable risk assessments and health and safety information
- Downloadable Teacher Resources for various age groups
- Animal Handling Sessions with one of our Keepers
- Private rooms available to book
- Talks/Tours available to book

OUTREACH SESSIONS

After a handful of successful visits to local schools and nurseries recently, we are now currently developing our Outreach Sessions for other establishments. These will include a short lesson, an animal handling session with some of our smaller creatures, activities for the students, and a book-reading of our own children's rhyming story.


EDUCATION OUTCOMES

As a result of our methods, we would like to see our visitors leave the park with a better understanding of animal species and awareness of the current threats towards their natural habitats. We would also like to see our visitors leave with knowledge of how to assist with conservation efforts at home.

We will monitor the growth and effectiveness of this policy through teacher questionnaires after the visit, regular measures of the number of schools and nurseries who book with us, and online surveys for the general public. We will also observe the behaviour of our visitors to identify the most effective educational aspects of the park.

We are very keen to partner with more educational establishments within the area, and we are pleased to be able to offer a large amount of volunteer placements for veterinary students and high school work experience placements throughout the year.

We understand that the broad field of education, especially regarding conservation and zoology is always growing and changing to adapt to new information. This is why we are committed to undertaking research to



learn about the latest news, technologies, and techniques in the field. We are currently researching workshops and conventions in Scotland for our staff to improve their educational skills and qualifications, and to gain further knowledge in how to ensure our visitors are inspired and well-informed when leaving the park.