

Safety Tips for Farms Conducting Group Visits

Inviting groups to the farm is growing in popularity. Many farmers consider this an opportunity to increase public understanding of farming, but it may simply increase the risk of accidents. Farming continues to be one of the most hazardous occupations, so visitors are entering a place that requires extra attention to safety.

The following tips were developed by Virginia Farm Bureau Safety to help you evaluate and reduce the number of hazards to visitors on your farm. Keep in mind that preventing accidents is a full time job. Simply checking-off this list will not eliminate all accidents, but it is a good start toward managing group visits. In addition, please consider inviting a Farm Bureau safety professional to your farm for a safety review prior to starting group visits. The service is free and the extra emphasis on safety will be worth your time.

10 Tips for Safety with Farm Visitors:

1. Good housekeeping prevents many slips, trips and falls – the most common injuries.
 - a. Be sure walkways are clear of debris, tools or other obstructions.
 - b. Limit access to any areas that may be slippery or eliminate the cause of the unsafe footing. Pay special attention to steps and handrails.
 - c. Remove loose or hanging nails and other sharp points that may catch visitors.
2. Be sure the entrance and exit areas of the farm are clearly marked. Never place parking areas across a public road from the farm. Check the view of on-coming traffic in both directions and from various heights. Remember, buses are slow to get onto the road and up to speed.
3. Create safe parking areas for buses and/or cars that are clearly marked and allow space for turning around. This should be well away from regular work areas.
4. Minimize work completed with machinery while visitors are present. Never allow equipment to be operated within close proximity of the group or any visitors.
5. Keep all visitors outside of fenced areas and never allow entry into pens or other areas with animals. Use signs and establish clear rules for where visitors can go.
6. Avoid petting areas and be sure to have hand sanitizers or good hand-washing facilities available. Encourage hand washing regardless of contact.
7. Avoid allowing any food consumption on the farm. If the group plans to eat while visiting, please insist on hand washing by all participants --- it's that important.
8. Do not allow "free-roaming" of the farm by any visitors or school groups.
9. Avoid creating play areas on the farm. Areas with hay bales or other stacked items are extremely dangerous and should be clearly off limits.
10. **Expect visitors to do the unexpected.** They consider your farm an amusement park and will likely do everything you are sure they would never do. Enforcing the rules on the farm is just part of helping your visitors have the best experience possible.

Should an accident occur, have a plan in place that includes contacting local emergency services and providing first aid until they arrive. Your plan and safety preparedness could save a life or prevent a serious injury.

Contact VFB Safety at 804-290-1376 or e-mail vfb_safety@vafb.com. You can also go to www.vafb.com and click on "safety" for more information.



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