



Create Your Farm Tour Checklist



Checklists help ensure that you and your visitors have a great experience. When creating/updating your checklist, consider the size of the group, their ages and the topics they want to cover while visiting your farm.

One Month Before the Tour

○ Work with the organization leader or teacher to determine logistics.

- Set the date.
- How much time will they have for the tour?
 - ▶ Consider travel time to and from the farm.
 - ▶ Learn when the participants will arrive.
- If your farm is hard to find, discuss meeting the group in town and escorting them to your farm.
- Discuss snacks/food. Some groups will welcome a snack, but be aware of visitors with food allergies. NEVER offer/serve raw milk to visitors.
- If children may see a cow calving or breeding, let the teacher and parents know before the tour.

○ Find out how many people will attend.

- If this is a school tour, have at least one adult chaperone for every 10 children; ask the teacher or organization leader to bring volunteers.
- The chaperones, who by and large are the food buyers in their households, will have a different set of questions. You will want to keep them confident in the dairy foods they buy.
- While you don't need chaperones for adults, you should have someone from the farm walk with the group to answer questions — at least one for every 15 adults. Have someone from your team bring up the rear to help answer questions from people in the back of the group.



○ **What do they want to see and learn? Tie this into writing your own goals.**

- If a fourth-grade class is focusing on agriculture in your state, it may be a general tour. But a high school agriculture class may want to focus on how you grow crops and feed them to your animals.
- Establish with the leader that certain areas of your farm need to be off-limits because of insurance liability. For example, you may want to say, “I’d rather not have the group visit the manure lagoon because we haul manure a few days a week, and I want to keep the group out of the way of the big tractors.”

With Your Farm Tour Team:

Just like running your farm, hosting farm tours takes a team. While you have a well-oiled machine to operate your dairy each day, hosting farm tours also needs a devoted team. When deciding who to help plan and host the tour, think about involving others outside of your immediate farm team. You also may include:

- Family members
- Employees
- Your veterinarian
- Nutritionists
- Co-op/processor field representatives
- Local dairy checkoff staff
- Local youth organizations — these organizations seek volunteer opportunities for their members and can help with various activities during the farm tour
- 4-H and FFA groups
- Dairy college students
- Girl/Boy Scout troops
- Local businesses you work with (e.g., equipment and feed dealers, bankers)



○ **Draft an outline of how you plan to conduct the farm tour.**

- Identify your goals — determine if your timing is the appropriate length and the number of people you need to help.
- Consider if you need tents, sun shades, portable toilets, tables and chairs, podium and microphone, sound system, portable lights, trash barrels and/or orange construction fencing.
 - ▶ Test the sound system and lights ahead of time.
 - ▶ Have alternative plans for inclement weather.

○ **Select your farm tour stations.**

- Consider stations that show how milk flows on the farm. For example, begin in a field where crops are grown, then move to the feed storage, then the barn, milking parlor and so forth.
- Create signs for each station with a brief description. Your local dairy promotion organization can help — contact the United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) at 517-349-8923.
- Be sure that everyone will be able to hear and see. You may need to separate into smaller groups and include additional tour guides. Or, consider renting a portable microphone or standing on an elevated surface. If the group stays together, have someone from your team bring up the rear to ensure that no one strays from the group and to help answer questions from people in the back of the group.



One Week Before the Tour

- **Connect with the group leader to finalize logistical details, including timing, number of people, where to park and other considerations.**

With Your Farm Tour Team:

- **Conduct a walk-through of the farm tour.**
 - Pick up miscellaneous items and equipment that visitors could trip over.
 - Remove anything that can be knocked down or rubbed up against, especially sharp objects. Pull out nails or screws that might catch on clothing, and look for sharp shelf corners and unstable objects.
 - Employees who are helping should practice their roles.
 - Make sure chemicals of any kind — cleaners, pesticides and antibiotics — are safely contained.
 - Saws, drills, files, needles, blades and other similar items should be put away and kept out of sight.
 - This may be the first time your visitors step foot on a dairy farm. Try to see your farm through their eyes. If something doesn't look right, either remove it from sight or fix it. Remove anything that does not look sanitary (e.g., dirty rags, rusty pieces of equipment, trash).
 - ▶ Ask one of your non-farming family members or friends to accompany you on a walk-through to provide their perspective.
- **Hold an employee meeting a few days before the tour.**
 - Review roles.
 - Talk with employees who are not playing a role in the tour.
 - ▶ Notify them of the timing of the tour.
 - ▶ Remind them to be aware of the visitors as they conduct their normal routines.
 - ▶ Remind them to be respectful of animals and equipment.



○ **Provide for sanitation needs, such as hand-washing stations and restrooms.**

- Hand-washing is important, so provide running water, soap and disposable towels for participants to wash their hands immediately after contact with animals.
- If running water is not available, waterless cleaner or antibacterial wipes can be substituted, but it's likely these substances have not been tested for their ability to inactivate pathogens under farm conditions.
- Provide adult supervision, especially for children under the age of 5.
- Identify and signpost restrooms visitors can use.
- Place waste cans throughout the farm tour.
- Consider water stations, especially if you are hosting the tour on a warm day.

Day of the Tour

Conduct a final walk-through to confirm cleanliness and safety — make sure paths are clear, animals are fed/watered and looking healthy.

○ **Establish a place where vehicles will park.**

- Have a clearly marked entrance and exit for visitors, and have someone direct vehicles.
- Do not let vehicles drive near the animals or in the path of large farm equipment.

○ **Your visitors will be curious about your farm; what you see every day is new to them so you'll want to give extra thought to keeping them safe around these areas.**

- Keep people — especially children — away from electric fencing. If it is necessary to have your guests near an electric fence, mark wires with a rag tie or tape. People should see where the wires are so they can be avoided. Also, explain why you have electric fencing, what happens when you touch it and that it is not harmful to the animals.
- Haymows and chutes are enticing to children. Unfortunately, it doesn't take much for a child who is unfamiliar with the surroundings to fall down a chute or leap off something too high and hurt themselves. Show the haymow to demonstrate where you store cow feed, but refrain from letting people walk around or play in the area.



- Avoid taking your guests through rocky or slippery terrain. If barn floors are slick, take measures to dry them by using barn lime, straw or wood shavings.
- Keep the group away from large equipment.
 - ▶ If you raise crops, consider planning tours around the busy spring planting and fall harvest to ensure large equipment is not in use in areas where the tour will be held.
 - ▶ Do not run machinery, tractors, wagons and other equipment during the tour. Pull keys out of the tractors.
- **Make sure your farm is neat and tidy; remember that first impressions are lasting ones!**
 - Set up a hand-washing station.

Right Before Your Visitors Arrive:

- **Change into clean clothes — perhaps a shirt with the farm's name (no stains).**
 - Have others who are helping you with the tour do the same.
 - Smile and have fun! You are the best person to tell your story!

