

LEAF's hints and tips for hosting the perfect Open Farm Sunday event

This year's Open Farm Sunday on the 8th June will see hundreds of farmers open their gates to the public to showcase British farming. LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), organisers of Open Farm Sunday give us their top tips for hosting the perfect event that everyone can enjoy:

Planning:

1. Get the description right:

- Register your event at www.farmsunday.org and make sure you've added as much detail as possible to your event description – such as opening times, contact details, address and directions, as well as any activities planned for the day and if visitors need to book in advance. Uploading pictures of your farm really helps.

2. Plan properly:

- Every Open Farm Sunday event is different. For example, you could hold a guided tour or walk for a small number of visitors, or open for a half or full day offering a number of activities, such as nature trails, demonstrations, food or machinery displays, tractor and trailer rides, or a Pollinator Survey - the type of event you hold is entirely up to you.
- Make sure you don't forget the important things (like toilets). You'll also need to carry out a risk assessment and tell your insurers that you are hosting an event. Refer to the planning checklist in the Open Farm Sunday handbook and contact LEAF or your Open Farm Sunday Regional Coordinator for help and advice. You'll find all their contact details at www.farmsunday.org.
- Spread the workload and get others to help with your event – book them early. Team up with your farming neighbours, agronomist, vet and conservation advisor. Your local Young Farmers or Scout groups may also be keen to lend a hand.

3. Promote your event:

- Make use of all the free resources available from LEAF to spread the word locally – there are flyers, postcards and posters you can personalise with your event details to help publicise your event.

- If you have your own website or Facebook account use them to promote your Open Farm Sunday event and make sure all the details are up to date. Include the Open Farm Sunday logo and link your entry to www.farmsunday.org.
- For larger events, inform your local media about what you have planned. You'll find a downloadable template press release at www.farmsunday.org where you can add your own event details.

4. It might rain, so plan accordingly

- Have a wet weather plan - poor weather may mean that fewer people will come but it doesn't have to ruin the day.
- Let people know that there is still plenty to see and do if the weather is bad. Your event description could say "If it rains the event will still go ahead with many activities under cover. Please ensure you wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions."

On the day:

5. Make the most of all resources

- LEAF provides lots of free resources, such as booklets, posters, signs and boards, to help you run your event. Order them at www.farmsunday.org.

6. Make people feel welcome:

- Many of your visitors will never have been on a farm before, so it is a good idea to have a welcome point where you can tell visitors what is happening, where and when. Put signs up at the entrance, for parking, toilets, refreshments etc.
- Have 'give-aways' ready, order leaflets, stickers and lots more at www.farmsunday.org.

7. Tell your story and keep things simple:

- Make your event memorable by making it personal to you and your farm. Your visitors are likely to remember stories about you, your family, your animals, why you wanted to become a farmer and why you love farming.
- When you're talking to visitors, beware of jargon – an agronomist is a crop doctor; a heifer a young cow; an acre is just over half a football pitch etc.

8. Make the link between food and farming:

- Many people don't realise that milk comes from cows and that potatoes are dug out of the ground! When talking to visitors start with what they know

(the food) and then work backwards – e.g. start with a loaf of bread rather than with a sheaf of wheat. This will help people make the link between what they see on the supermarket shelf (and on their plates) and what is on your farm.

- Set up displays and use ‘props’ to help tell your farming story. For example, pot up some wheat plants, have buckets of grain and loaves of bread, breakfast cereal or biscuits to illustrate the story.

9. It’s not just about animals:

- Yes, animals are a great crowd puller, but they are not essential to a great Open Farm Sunday event. Visitors will be amazed by how much there is to see, do and learn – no matter what type of farm you have.

And finally

10. Enjoy the day!

- Annabel Shackleton, Open Farm Sunday manager at LEAF says, “Hosting a successful Open Farm Sunday event is extremely satisfying so make sure you take the time to enjoy it yourself. We’d like to thank everyone that has signed up already. With the whole industry working together on the 8 June we really can truly *Celebrate British Farming and Food.*”

To register, update your event details and get all your free resources visit www.farmsunday.org.

- Ends -

For up-to-date campaign information and to let us know about your plans for Open Farm Sunday, follow us on Twitter - twitter.com/openfarmsunday

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Editor’s note:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. It works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities. LEAF has organised Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (Registered charity no: 1045781)
- The ninth annual Open Farm Sunday on 8th June 2014 provides a great opportunity for people to truly get to know how their food is produced and how the countryside around them is cared for.

- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain will also be hosting Open Farm School Days. Running from the 2nd to 13th June, they will provide thousands of school children with the opportunity to visit a farm to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.
- Sponsors for Open Farm Sunday 2014 include: **Asda, BASF, Country Life butter, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Kellogg's, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Syngenta, Tesco, The Co-operative, Waitrose, plus Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (from its BPEX, DairyCo, Eblex, HDC and HGCA divisions) and Hellmann's.**
- The third national farm Pollinator Survey, supported by the British Ecological Society, NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust will once again be carried out on selected Open Farm Sunday farms. Visitors will be asked to count the number and type of insects they see in different habitats, which will help scientists understand more about this vital process.
- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming and our regular blogs at leafmarque.wordpress.com.