



RESOURCE GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR FARMERS AND EDUCATORS

SCHOOL FARM VISITS



Important Notice and Disclaimer

These materials are provided for educational and informational purposes only and do not constitute legal advice, financial advice, tax advice, or investment advice on any matter.

These materials may not be current and up-to-date. You should not act or refrain from acting based on these materials or the information they contain without seeking legal advice from an attorney licensed in your jurisdiction or other appropriate professional. Farm Credit of the Virginias, ACA expressly disclaims any liability for all acts and omissions taken or made in reliance on these materials or any information contained in these materials.



This resource guide, developed by the Farm Credit Knowledge Center, is a variation of content sourced from the original 2007 New England regional guidebook "Vermont Farm-to-School: A Guide for Connecting Farms to Schools and Communities."

www.FarmCreditofVirginias.com/Knowledge-Center



Copyright© 2022 by Farm Credit of the Virginias ACA. All Rights Reserved. No portion of these materials may be copied, modified, distributed, transmitted, or publicly displayed without prior written permission of Farm Credit of the Virginias, ACA.



WHY LEARN ON THE FARM?

Students are our next generation of community members, agriculturalists, consumers and stewards of the land. Hands-on learning experiences are invaluable to their growth and development as they begin to understand the world around them. During a school farm visit, interactions contribute to their understanding of the natural world, agriculture, and food systems. Students often leave farm visits with a passion for agriculture and a better sense of their local agricultural community.





THE FARMER'S GUIDE

To ensure the safest and most successful visit possible, consider the following tips:

Rules

Rules should be set by the farmer and shared with the teacher before the visit.

The teacher should review the rules with their students before the farm visit and again on the farm. If you need assistance developing rules, ask the teacher to help you.

Rules to consider are:

- Stay in the designated area.
- Walk at all times. Running is not allowed.
- Listen to the farmer at all times.
- Watch where you are walking.
- Respect the farm.
- Have fun!

Safety

Be prepared for unexpected events. Have a first aid kit on hand and extra water, sunscreen and bug spray. Be aware of any food allergies of the students. Other things to keep in mind include:

- Allergies to food, plants and animals.
- Sun exposure time.
- Wildlife that may be encountered while on the farm.
- Farm animals.
- Farm equipment located in the area.

Group Size

An effective way to manage a large group is to break it into smaller groups of 5-6 students. Ask the teacher if they will be assigning supervising adult chaperones to smaller groups. The smaller groups can be part of the large group or travel independently through different areas or activities set up on the farm. Smaller groups allow for a rotation through "stages" of learning centers.



Benefits of hosting students at the farm:

- You can share your farming experience and passion with the next generation.
- Build connections with members of your community.
- Connect to consumers of all ages.
- Tell your story of agriculture and the importance of the industry.
- Educate teachers and other adults about farming.
- Create a potential income stream by diversifying your operation.
- Provide hands-on real-world experiences on the farm.
- Advocate for agriculture and inspire new young and beginning farmers.



THE FARMER'S GUIDE

Educational Program

Every school farm visit should include an educational program. On-farm learning reinforces what they are learning in school. Make sure to research activities around the topics you know have to do with your specific operation. Seek advice and guidance from the visiting teacher for what will be a good fit educationally and for age appropriateness.

Adult Supervision

Find out how many teachers, chaperones/parents will be attending the farm visit. If it has been determined that educational stations will be offered, ask the teacher if there are adults willing to assist by running a station.

Parking

The students will most likely arrive by bus. Make sure you have adequate parking space that allows for the unloading and loading of the students.

Restroom Facilities

You will need to provide adequate restroom facilities and a place for handwashing.

Required Insurance

Do you have the required insurance? Check with your insurance agent to see if you have coverage for visitors and/or accidents or if you need specific permission forms. Check to see if they offer one-day coverage.

During the Visit

- Introduce yourself as students arrive.
- Meet the teachers and chaperones. They are there to support you throughout the visit. Don't hesitate to ask for their assistance.
- Review the rules you had provided to the teacher before the visit. Point out clearly marked areas that are off-limits.
- Have the teacher split the students into their smaller groups.
- Have students rotate through stations with engaging hands-on interactive activities.
- Consider setting aside a few minutes at the end of the day for questions and a brief discussion of the day's events. This is your time to share what you enjoyed about the day.
- Complete the post-trip survey for farmers and provide it to the teacher.





THE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Farm visits are an excellent way to reinforce concepts learned in school. On-the-farm learning provides real-world experiences and encourages life skill development. Follow these tips to ensure a safe and engaging farm visit.

Before You Go

- Determine what you are looking for in a farm visit:
 - Is there a specific experience you want for your students?
 - How will the farm visit complement class learning?
- Reach out to the farmer about your idea and determine the best day for a farm visit.
- Discuss with the farmer what you are looking for and what they have to offer. Determine the schedule for the day, whether there will be hands-on stations available, adult volunteer needs, etc. Work together with the farmer to determine what materials may be needed and who will be providing them.
- Inform the farmer of any special needs, dietary requirements, allergies and physical challenges.
- Obtain permission slips and secure chaperones and adult volunteers.
- Begin to discuss the trip with students. Review the farmer's rules and behavior expectations.

During the Visit

- Make name tags.
- Provide a printed schedule to adult chaperones/volunteers.
- Divide students into their smaller groups and introduce them to their adult chaperone.
- Review the rules.
- Reminder: It is not the responsibility of the farmer to manage and supervise the students. Remind adult chaperones of their roles and expectations.

Wrap Up

- Consider having your students write thank-you notes to the farmer.
- Take a few minutes to complete the post-trip survey for teachers and provide to the farmer.
- Reinforce learning with a lesson highlighting what you wanted the students to learn from the experience.





FARM VISIT INFORMATION FORM

Teacher:
Farm:

Visit Date:
Visit Time:

School Information

School Name:
Grade:
Phone:
Email:
Best Time to Contact:
Special Needs:

Farm Information

Farm Name:
Farm Type:
Contact Name:
Phone:
Email:
Best Time to Contact:

Visit Details

Number of Students:

Number of Adults:

"Rain" Date (if needed):

Farm Visit Time:

Depart:

Return:

How will you be traveling (car, bus?):

Will you be bringing lunch?

Interactive Stations (if any):

Farm activities, supplies and materials provided by the farmer:

Farm activities, supplies and materials provided by the teacher:



POST-TRIP SURVEY - EDUCATOR

To be completed by the educator at the end of the visit.

Please take a moment to let the farmer know what your visit was like for you and your students. Your comments are important for the success of future farm field trips.

Educator:

School:

Visit Date:

Do you feel the students enjoyed the farm field trip? Yes / No

Do you feel the farm field trip was educational? Yes / No

Do you feel the trip was engaging for the students? Yes / No

What was the highlight of the farm field trip for your class?

Were you able to connect this farm field trip with the standards for your grade? If so, which standards?

Which follow-up activities do you plan on doing with your class?

How do you think this trip can be improved?

Is there any additional information that would help you to prepare for this trip in the future?

Other comments or suggestions:

Date Completed:



POST-TRIP SURVEY - FARMER

To be completed by the farmer at the end of the visit.

Please take a moment to let the educator know what the visit was like for you, your farm, and your staff. Your comments are important for the success of future farm field trips.

Farm Name:

School:

Visit Date:

What was the highlight for you as the farm visit host?

How can this farm visit be improved?

Was the group size manageable?

Was the time allowed for the visit reasonable?

Was the number of adult supervisors sufficient?

Were you adequately prepared for the visit? If no, what information would you find helpful for future farm visits?

Would you be willing to host a farm field trip in the future?

Are you able to visit the classroom to continue the farm-to-school connection? If so, what time of year is most convenient for you?

Other Comments:

Date Completed: ____/____/____



 FARM CREDIT
KNOWLEDGE CENTER

www.FarmCreditofVirginias.com/Knowledge-Center