



Linking Environment And Farming

Hosting Walks and Talks A Farmer's Guide to Getting it Right

Case studies from around the country



Farming • Food • Countryside • Wildlife • People • Farm Visits
www.leafuk.org

About LEAF



LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is a national charity that helps farmers improve the way they farm by encouraging them to take up Integrated Farming. LEAF also helps to create a better public understanding of farming through our national network of Demonstration Farms and Innovation Centres. We bring farmers and consumers together to raise awareness of how farmers are working in harmony with nature to produce good food with environmental care.



Speak Out – the LEAF communications initiative

LEAF's 'Speak Out' initiative encourages farmers to improve their communication skills and provide them with the know how to explain 'what they do and why they do it.' Speak Out is a self-help CD-Rom that has already helped thousands of farmers tell their story. LEAF also arranges communication training events for farmers.



Making your Marque – The LEAF Marque

You can buy food grown on some of our members' farms in retail outlets across the country. Food carrying the LEAF Marque logo has been grown by farmers who are committed to improving the environment for the benefit of the countryside.

Technical Tools

LEAF produces a range of practical management tools for farmers to help them take up Integrated Farming. These include the LEAF Audit and the Handbook for IFM. A number of practical, 'hands-on' field events for farmers are also held throughout the year.

Getting Involved

LEAF is a membership organisation for farmers and the public. LEAF members receive a range of benefits including the LEAF Audit, reduced rates for field events and farm notice boards, visits to Demonstration Farms, communication tools as well as regular newsletters and e-briefs. Becoming a LEAF member is also the first step to becoming LEAF Marque accredited.



Open Farm Sunday

Open Farm Sunday is a national open farm day, co-ordinated by LEAF. Farms across the country open for one day in June and invite people onto their farms to hear and see the positive steps farmers are taking to look after the countryside whilst producing safe, wholesome and affordable food. Most importantly, the day is a reminder to us all that farms matter!

To find out more about Open Farm Sunday visit www.farmsunday.org

For more information

To find out more about LEAF's activities, becoming a member and supporting our work, please contact:

LEAF
The National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh
Warwickshire CV8 2LZ

T: 024 7641 3911
F: 024 7641 3636
E: enquiries@leafuk.org
www.leafuk.org

Introduction - make the most of the opportunity

There is no disputing the value of farm visits. Farm walks are amongst the most effective ways to connect with adults and children alike. Your visitors get the chance to hear direct from you, with all the reality of agriculture around them, the challenges and the delights of producing crops and keeping livestock.

Each of you has something special to show and a different story to tell. More and more people want to learn how their food is produced and what farmers are doing to care for the environment. Farms are fascinating places for people to visit. So make the most of the opportunity and grab the chance to tell others about what you do and why you're doing it. Whatever your farming business, whatever the time of year, whatever your chosen audience, there is lots to see.



This guidebook includes six case studies of farmers with tips to share with you of what works best for them. We hope you will find it useful, but most of all, we hope it will encourage you to open your own farm gates and have a go yourself. Here are six farmers with tips to share with you of what works best for them.



Jake Freestone

Team Approach Works Best

Sally Blundell

Putting the Fun into Farm Walks

Tim Teague

Points on Paper

David Watson

Back to School

Will Edmonds

The Route to Success

Ian Pigott

The Personal Touch

Jake Freestone Overbury Farms, Gloucestershire

"I started by helping out at a neighbour's farm walk. You get ideas of what to expect and try out on your own farm. I found the communications training LEAF organises really useful. For your own event, 'buddy up' with someone who has done an event before. You can't park cars, demonstrate the workings of the sprayer and serve tea at the same time!

"Set yourself some goals. Ask yourself what are the two things I want these people to remember from the day?"

Tell your insurance company what you are planning. There's rarely a charge to host an



event. You must complete the relevant Health and Safety Risk Assessment forms (see page 17) - not necessarily too taxing but time well spent. Keep the record on file. Agree with your team a plan of action if someone can't keep up or needs help.

Set yourself some goals. Ask yourself "what are the two things I want these people to remember from the day?" I get together a lot of objects to touch: a fleece, a carpet sample, a bucket of wheat, loaf of bread, a can of mushy peas and pot of clotted cream. Visual aids stimulate questions and get conversation and discussions going, which will help you and your other speaker(s) get the point of the day across much better than just you lecturing them.

Team Approach Works Best



I work up a little feedback form for the visitors to fill in. Just 5-10 questions, tick boxes are quickest. Was the event too long, too short or about right? Find out what they liked and what they would leave out. I ask for contact details. E-mails are great. You can let them know when there's another walk or talk or direct them to your website and blog (I've just started one of my own). If you sell directly from the farm then your customer base will increase.

Have fun. It will be tiring and hard work but very rewarding. Our customers want more information about their food and the environment in which we operate. The unique opportunity we have on Open Farm Sunday to help satisfy that demand must be taken up with relish."

Top Tips

- Set yourself some goals
- Put up LEAF information boards to mark the stops
- Use props to prompt interaction and discussion
- 'Buddy up' with someone who has done an event before
- Tell your insurance company what you are planning
- Fill in a Health and Safety assesment form
- Ask visitors to complete a feed back form

Sally Blundell Hollowtrees Farm, Suffolk

"Taking people on walks round the farm is a great pleasure. To make it fun for them and me, I'm always thinking up ways to make it as interesting and 'busy' as possible. By 'busy' I mean that there have to be lots of interesting things to see and do along the way, in every season.

"I keep my language simple, never technical. You have to be able to relate to your visitors lives."

I tell stories about the hedges, the oldest trees and the adventures farmers have. I keep my language simple, never technical. You have to be able to relate to your visitors lives.



It's important people understand farmers have lots of decisions to make. I ask the children to tell me how I know when a crop is ready for harvest. Then I ask them to go and choose which cabbage, for example, is ready. I check the ones chosen and then, if ready, I cut it for them and talk about what delicious food that cabbage will make.

Visitors – old and young alike – enjoy feeding the animals. We have designed the livestock building so people can be near the animals and feed them safely. We are not afraid to make the link between the livestock and the meat in the farm shop. We are honest. If there is an animal that is sick we put up a sign saying so and explain what treatment it's getting.

Putting the Fun into Farm Walks



I want people to be surprised. The goats do that. Visitors put feed in a tray on a belt and then turn the wheel to lift it to the top of a platform four metres up and the goats climb the ramp and walk along the high, narrow beam to get it. People are amazed. But I use their interest to get them to think about why goats have a head for heights and how their feet are designed for it.

There's no point in saying interesting things that can't be heard. We decided to invest in a head piece and speaker system and that really helps. It means that on the tractor and trailer ride I can carry on talking – and I mean talking, not shouting. I've developed a great whistle to help with crowd control!"

Top Tips

- Make it fun, 'busy' and safe
- Tell stories and keep your language simple
- Invest in a head piece and speaker system so people can hear you
- Involve people and offer activities from feeding animals to welly-chucking

Tim Teague Manor Farm, Shropshire

"Some of my visits are walks or workshops held by someone else and they do all the invitations and prepare the printed material. If you are organising an event yourself then there are several things you can do on paper to help get things right."

"Discover and note down the expectations of the people coming. If you don't do that you haven't a hope of meeting them and they'll go away disappointed."

To advertise or promote your event you can use the media. That can work really well for



Tim Teague, Manor Farm



events like Open Farm Sunday. You will need to write a very snappy press release to catch their attention. Mention it is free – that often helps get their attention. I have heard that even tourist information offices have helped some farmers to get a good turnout.

If you want to reach particular target audiences like ramblers or bird watchers, there are all sorts of local groups and networks ie. The Ramblers Association and RSPB, who are often willing to send out information on your event to their members. This is a great way to publicise your event and it won't cost you anything. It saves you a lot of time and gets your event and the point of it out to the right people. We had over twenty farmers here to a soils workshop recently and I had not invited any of them!

Points on Paper



Discover and note down the expectations of the people coming. If you don't do that you haven't a hope of meeting them and they'll go away disappointed.

A farm map with a few details makes a great hand-out. As a route map you can hand it out at the start. If it has more detail then giving it out at the end is better if you don't want people studying it when you want them to be listening.

Keeping track of what you need to be preparing is absolutely crucial. Make yourself a checklist of things to be done weeks ahead, the week and day before and on the day. Otherwise you suddenly find the event is two days away and you haven't got everything covered.

I have been paid as a venue for others to hold events for farmers but I do not feel you can charge the general public to come on a farm walk. We need to appear generous and fight the negative image of the grasping subsidy-led farmer."



Top Tips

- Get on and give it a try
- practice makes perfect
- Make yourself a checklist of things to be done weeks ahead, the day before and on the day itself
- Find out the expectations of the group before they arrive
- A farm map with a few details makes a great hand-out
- Farms are fascinating - so drop the gloom

David Watson Wimpole Hall Farm, Hertfordshire



"If I said I never had butterflies in the tummy before the group arrived. I'd be lying. But nerves make sure you do your best for each group that comes along.

Health and safety must not put you off having school groups. It's one of the greatest experiences that kids can have. If I had not been sat on a tractor as a small child I probably would have never gone into agriculture! There's a lot of information available on the internet, from LEAF and the Health and Safety Executive. Teachers help too. They have to protect the youngsters.

"I find out how the visit must tie in with the curriculum – art, maths, science etc. Match what you offer to what the group needs."

I find out how the visit must tie in with the curriculum – art, maths, science etc. Match what you offer to what the group needs – not

the other way round. When the teacher visits beforehand, I offer help with a quiz sheet for the walk.

Machinery can be made fascinating. I always line up a demonstration of a job, like shifting bales for the cattle to show to the kids, lined up safe behind metal gates. A moving, working farm will stick in their minds. Of course animals are a big hit with all ages. Visitors want to touch. We use a lot of alcohol gel. As we go round the farm I carry a bottle. Any child that handles an animal or is exposed to faeces or urine gets a squirt of alcohol gel and shown how to rub it in. We



Back to School



insist that before eating and drinking and definitely before leaving the farm that all visitors wash their hands with soap and hot water: they get a sticker when they have.

Get feedback. From teacher and children. With kids, that's one thing you cannot fault: their honesty. They'll be your harshest critic and your staunchest allies. I cannot honestly think of a single visit that I've done where my helpers and I haven't thought, when the kids have gone off on their bus, 'that would've worked better if...! You've got to make a note of it to remind yourself next time. We have to reach the next generation. Take the farm to the classroom if the class cannot come to the farm.'



Top Tips

- Really interact with youngsters-don't lecture them
- Tie the visit in with the curriculum
- Line up a demonstration of a job ie. shifting bales
- Review what went right/wrong and remember it for next time

Will Edmonds Upper Wick Farm, Worcestershire



Will Edmonds, Upper Wick Farm

"Have five main things to have a look at on your way around the walk. Prioritise them in order of ascending interest. I always finish with a highlight. In my case that's the chickens!"

When I advertise a walk, I always tell people it will involve a mile and a half walk, which might take a few hours and includes a couple of stiles. If people are not able to cope they tell us and we make arrangements like offering a lift in a vehicle.

Quite often I have a half way point where I say "you can go back easily from here if you've had enough or, if you want to see more and are feeling up to it, we can go round a bit longer". Give them the choice. A self-guided trail around the farm takes up less of your time, so long as it's self-explanatory and well set up, but you have least chance of listening to their concerns or influencing them.

There's always a chance someone objects to something or other. Respect people's viewpoint. You don't have to accept their opinion but you must respect their right to

have it. Listen calmly to what they say but remember, it is your day and you needn't be steamrollered. Move on by saying "well, that's really interesting but we'd better walk on to the next thing I think you'll be interested to see..." and that deflects the argument and defuses awkwardness.

"Have five main things to have a look at on your way around the walk. In my case, I prioritise them in order of ascending interest."



The Route to Success



The largest group I had was 30 and that's huge if you're on your own. 10-20 is ideal. With more than 15 you need someone else to help. The front half will always come to you. The back half will straggle out so having someone else on your side who knows the plan and can chat away and answer questions, is very useful. And in the event someone needs to go back then you have someone who can take care of that.

Hosting walks is very satisfying. It makes you think ahead, beyond the farm perhaps, not to mention perhaps farming in a smarter, tidier way because you know you've got people coming round!"

Top Tips

- Have five main things to have a look at on your way around the farm
- Listen to what people have to say - respect their viewpoint
- For larger group sizes have someone else to help out
- Use portable props - my favourite is a spade
- Explain the route, terrain and time involved from the start

Ian Pigott Thrales End Farm, Hertfordshire



Ian Pigott, Thrales End Farm



"Breaking the ice at the start is important. I have everything prepared so I am ready and when each visitor turns up I always shake everyone's hand and introduce myself and say I hope they will have a good time. There's often early-arrivers so I have things to read or look at and then I needn't stand there talking with them until the rest arrive.

"I start by asking a few questions of them. It also gives me the chance to double check who's in the audience and to pitch things at the right level."

When we are ready for the off - and to get people feeling that it is the kind of walk where we want to encourage discussion amongst the group - I start by asking a few questions of them. It also gives me the chance to double check who's in the audience and to pitch things at the right level. With a small group I will kick off by

asking people to introduce themselves. I use questions on the walk too. There are 'open' questions - that get things going better than 'closed' questions that just get a yes/no response. I think humility is good. People like to hear a farmer admit to the mistakes made! Occasionally you will get someone who starts to dominate things and then you have to intervene with a tactful comment and suggest things move on.

Inviting someone from the media to attend increases your exposure. A walk for local farmers might not be of interest but Open Farm Sunday is a fantastic story and photo

The Personal Touch



opportunity. An email invitation may not get a response so try to speak to them personally to establish a rapport. On the day, help them to get what they need.

Adapt your plan to the audience, the weather (get under cover out of the heat or wind or wet) and the general feel of how it is going. If you are cold they will be colder and will not want to listen. Do what you can to draw people out but remember that you'll always get quiet and chatty groups.

Offering people refreshments afterwards is really good. You must not rush off. People can linger a little and ask you more questions and browse the materials you have out on display."

Photographs courtesy of Chilterns Conservation Board



Top Tips

- Greet all visitors personally
- Create discussion within the group
- Use the media to increase your reach
- Have things to read and look at for early arrivers
- Ask 'open' questions to find out who's in the group
- For small groups ask people to introduce themselves
- Adapt the visit to the audience, the weather and the general feel of how it is going

Farms as classrooms

Farms are great places to learn about our world and how it works. A visit to a farm can be a fantastic place to bring core curriculum requirements to life – here are some activities that get children moving, talking and thinking...

Leaf Labelling

Show the children a leaf from a tree and tell them the name of the tree. The children can then find a tree which has the same leaf

Treasure Hunts

Working in small groups, each group is given a simple container ie. yogurt pot or egg carton and asked to search an area of the farm for:

- 3 things beginning with a letter of the alphabet
- something smelly
- something prickly
- something smooth
- a yellow leaf, a brown twig etc.

Twig Trails

Get the children to make arrows out of twigs to record their walk around the farm. Ask them to collect interesting things on their walk to remind them of their day. Get them to tie these things to a stick with grass stems. Ask them look out for colourful leaves from a wood and clover from a grass field.

Silence is Golden

Get the children to stand silently (!) in a field with their eyes closed and ask them to listen for a whole minute – what sounds do they hear, ask them to describe the sounds. Go to another area of the field and do the same exercise, comparing different sounds.

Describing

Ask the children to suggest words which they could use to describe the field – cold, windy, brown/green, wet/dry etc. Ask children to count up all the suggested words and tell them how well they have done as a class.

Tree Hugging

Working in pairs, one child blindfolds their partner and leads them to a tree. The blindfolded child hugs the tree – feeling its bark and ‘gets to know’ their tree. The child is then led away from their tree, the blindfold is taken off and the child is asked to go and find their tree.

Using a spinney or wooded area

Choose a suitable spinney or wooded area and get the children to close their eyes and ask them to think about what is beneath their feet – soil, pathway, grass, stones etc. Ask them to decide whether they think the area is light/dark, wet/dry, windy/still. Show the children different varieties of trees, discuss their ages and how to tell a tree's age and what you do to keep trees healthy. Tell the children what creatures live in wooded areas and what signs to look out for ie. animal droppings, rabbit holes, claw marks etc. Get the children to hunt for these signs.

Using a pond, stream or river

Ask the children to stand quietly by the edge of the water and think about the noises they can hear – birdsong, wind in the reeds, lapping water. Talk about the value of ponds on farms and the animals/insects that might live there. Get the children to observe as many living creatures as they can around the pond.

Sample Risk Assessment Form				
Assessed by:				Date:
Hazard	Risk of	Risk to	Control Measure	Level of Risk
Unfamiliar farm	Becoming lost	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for the teacher to visit the farm beforehand. • Keep an eye on the children • Think about the ratio of adults to children (Local Authorities set their own standards) • Maps of the farm are a good idea • For large groups, think about a 'lost child' plan and have a registration point 	Medium
Moving vehicles on the farm	Being run over	Children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the risk of moving vehicles • Restrict vehicle movement to essential/emergency vehicles • Keep children safe from moving vehicles if you are putting on a display/showing an activity 	Low
Farm animals	Infectious diseases	Children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have hand washing facilities available (ie. anti-bacterial hand gel) • Get children to wash hands after feeding/touching animals and before eating • Tell children to behave sensibly and stay together when passing cattle 	Medium
Water on the farm	Drowning	Children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a close eye on children and tell them to be careful next to water • Put simple railings up around particularly deep water areas • Have long poles or ropes at hand to use as throw lines 	Medium
Farm machinery	Getting tangled up Crushing Cuts	Children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a close eye on children next to farm machinery - tell them of the dangers! • Protect particularly dangerous areas of machinery • Put up simple railings around dangerous machinery • Check machinery regularly for loose and dangerous parts • Keys not to be left in machines during visits 	Low
Facilities	Lack of toilets Rest facilities Refreshments	Children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer toilet facilities • Think about areas where the group can rest • Offer simple refreshments (drinking water/tea) where appropriate 	Low
First aid	Make sure your first aid kit is complete and keep it to hand			
Child protection	Make sure that staff involved in child supervision have undergone a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check			

. inform... inspire... reassure... show... *amaze*... connect... describe... enjoy... 17

Sources of help, inspiration and materials

There are many organisations that can provide you with a wide range of tools and resources to help you host effective visits to your farm. Some of the resources are free, some carry a small charge.

LEAF - Linking Environment And Farming
The National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ
T: 024 7641 3911
F: 024 7641 3636
E: enquiries@leafuk.org
W: www.leafuk.org

Resources:

Farm information boards, Activity Sheets, Speak Out communications toolkit, training courses in effective communication skills and hosting visits.

FACE - Farming and Countryside Education
Stoneleigh Park, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ
T: 024 7685 8261
E: janet@face-online.org.uk
W: www.face-online.org.uk

Resources:

Image gallery, fact sheets, case studies, farm visits resource bank, distance e-learning tool to help farmers host effective educational visits to their farms.

HSE - Health and Safety Executive

London: Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, LONDON SE1 9HS

Liverpool: Redgrave Court, Merton Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 7HS

Resources:

HSE produce a wide range of free publications giving clear and simple advice

on a range of health and safety issues. They produce a very useful booklet - 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' which can be downloaded from their website. Visit HSE via their website www.hse.gov.uk or by telephone 0845 345 0055. To order a publication telephone 01787 881165

HGCA - Home Grown Cereals Authority
Caledonia House, 223 Pentonville Road, London N1 9HY
T: 020 7520 3920
E: publications@hgca.com
W: www.hgca.com

Resources:

Wide range of free educational resources for all ages including: teacher notes, posters, videos, interactive DVDs, games and after school cooking packs. Topics covered include The Malting Barley Story, The Grain Chain, Fun with Flour and Healthy Living.

RHET - The Royal Highland Education Trust
Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh EH28 8NF
T: 0131 335 6227
F: 0131 333 5236
E: rhetinfo@rhass.org.uk
W: www.rhet.org.uk

Resources:

RHET is an educational charity, established in 1999. It aims to create the opportunity for each child in Scotland to learn about the countryside and to ensure a wider understanding of the environmental, economic and social realities of the countryside in Scotland. Resources include Speaker Kits for farmers, education materials, posters, pupil workbooks and a DVD on Scotland's Farming Year.

Checklist for making your farm walk a success

- ☐ Get experience by helping out at other farmer's events
- ☐ Promote your farm as a location to the right people in person, via networks, posters, press or tourist information
- ☐ Notify insurers of the visit
- ☐ Observe health and safety procedures – risk assessment, handwashing facilities
- ☐ Involve others as helpers or speakers. Brief them well.
- ☐ Plan route taking account of interests/needs of group, time available, distance, weather
- ☐ Prepare props - small or large - for each stop along the way
- ☐ Set up display with posters and props of interest for early arrivers
- ☐ Walk the route. Check all is well. Time it.
- ☐ Sort the messages for each stop along the route and the thought you want all to leave with
- ☐ Organise refreshments/toilet and hand-washing facilities
- ☐ Have 'give-aways' ready – farm facts, leaflets, stickers, products to look for and where to buy etc
- ☐ Signs up at entrance, for parking, toilets etc
- ☐ To get feedback – know what you will ask or prepare sheets for visitors to give comments

And afterwards

- ☐ Make a note of what went right and wrong – and do even better next time!



LINKING ENVIRONMENT AND FARMING
Integrated Farm Management

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over 20 years experience in training
and on air (radio), on-line and
new media productions for UK
and international clients. Many of
WRENmedia's activities are linked
with agriculture.

www.wrenmedia.co.uk

"The whole walk was a series
of discussions. The farmer was
as interested to hear different
views as we were."

Trainee teacher

"I think the farmer is a nice
man. He works very hard and
he wears nice boots."

Helen, aged 7 on school visit

"We just wanted an enjoyable
afternoon out but we got much
more. We live in the village but
there was a lot we just did not
know about like what goes on in
the fields around us. Fascinating."

Open Farm Sunday family group

"The whole event was such a buzz
from start to finish. Best
day's work I've done in years."

Open Farm Sunday farmer helper

"A blue sky, the farm on show
and the sound of chatting and
laughter from the visitors:
heaven."

Open Farm Sunday host

"Farming can be a lonely business.
You can see how getting
together and discussing helps."

Farmer holding soils meeting