



# LEAF's Open Farm Sunday 2011

## Farming's Annual Open Day 2011 Report

ASDA

frontier

JOHN DEERE



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Open Farm Sunday is one of the farming industry's biggest success stories. Organised by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), it gives everyone the chance to discover the story behind their food and the vital role farmers play in caring for the countryside. Since the first Open Farm Sunday in 2006 it has grown substantially. Now highly valued and an important day in the calendar, it is worth around £4.3 million to the food and farming industry.

Open Farm Sunday is farming's annual open day. A day when hundreds of farmers open their gates and welcome the public onto their farms. Each event is unique. They range in size from a farm walk for local villagers to 'open days' with tractor and trailer rides, farmers markets, activities for children and much more! They bring together thousands of helpers from neighbouring farms, industry experts and local communities. The focus is on helping the public to discover the link between food, farming and nature.



Please help support our work by joining LEAF today.

Tel: 024 7641 3911 E: [enquiries@leafuk.org](mailto:enquiries@leafuk.org)

[www.leafuk.org](http://www.leafuk.org)

LEAF, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LG

Registered charity no. 1045781



## Contents

Key successes

The visitors

The host farmers

Our support for host farmers

Working with the media

Thank you

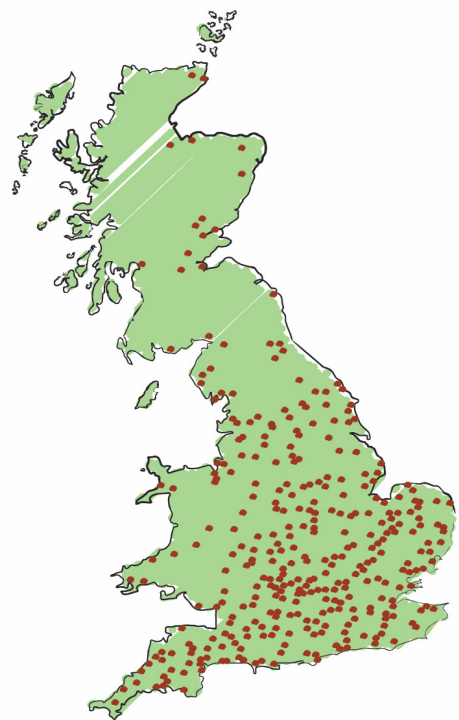
Next year's Open Farm Sunday  
**17<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

[www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)

# Key successes

## The numbers

An amazing **120,000 people** were welcomed onto **362 farms** on Open Farm Sunday to discover life on Britain’s farms. The events were supported by around **4,500 helpers** including employees, family, friends, neighbouring farmers, advisors, sponsors and suppliers. We were also very grateful to the **18 sponsors** who generously supported Open Farm Sunday 2011. **One big thank you** to everyone involved who helped to make Open Farm Sunday, once again, a huge success.



	Number of events	Number of visitors
South West	86	8,170
South East	75	22,350
East of England	58	39,962
East Midlands	28	14,196
West Midlands	26	2,075
Yorkshire and Humber	28	9,380
North East	5	2,855
North West	21	5,523
Scotland	18	10,728
Wales	16	4,336
International	1	594
TOTALS	362	120,169
Average number of visitors per farm		332

## Weather extremes

Where the sun shone in Scotland and the East of England, we saw a 25% increase in visitor numbers. However, many farmers had to deploy their wet weather plans as, just days after drought was declared across Britain, the heavens opened with some parts of the UK getting more than half an inch of rain in less than 24 hours. One farm in Cornwall reported driving rain and winds gusting to gale force 8 - sadly this event and 9 others were forced to cancel.

Many farmers in the South, Midlands, North West and Wales were amazed and heartened as thousands of visitors came prepared for the rain and pulled on their wellies and waterproofs to support British farmers.





## About the size of it

Open Farm Sunday events range in size enormously. Some events remain small as host farmers limit visitors to neighbouring villagers. However, many are becoming bigger, annual events attracting increasing numbers of visitors. The trend also continues for neighbouring farmers working together and taking turns to host larger, joint events. This year:

- 217 farms had over 100 visitors
- 61 farms had over 500 visitors
- 4 farms had over 3000 visitors – a staggering success!

## Open Farm Sunday Kenya

We were delighted that LEAF members in Kenya organised an Open Farm Sunday event. Over 550 school children, students, local farmers and government officials came to discover how their food is produced and the land is managed sustainably. Messages included 'every drop of water counts', 'the world of panda miti (biodiversity)' and 'soil is life'. Displays included photographs of a number of British Open Farm Sunday events. Feedback from everyone was very positive and plans are already underway for another open farm event next year.



## Government support

Reconnecting the public with how their food is grown and why farming matters is at the heart of government policy. We welcomed the Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman and Farm Minister, Jim Paice to farms in Alcester and Ely. We were also delighted that Scottish Government Rural Affairs Secretary, Richard Lockhead visited an event in Morayshire.

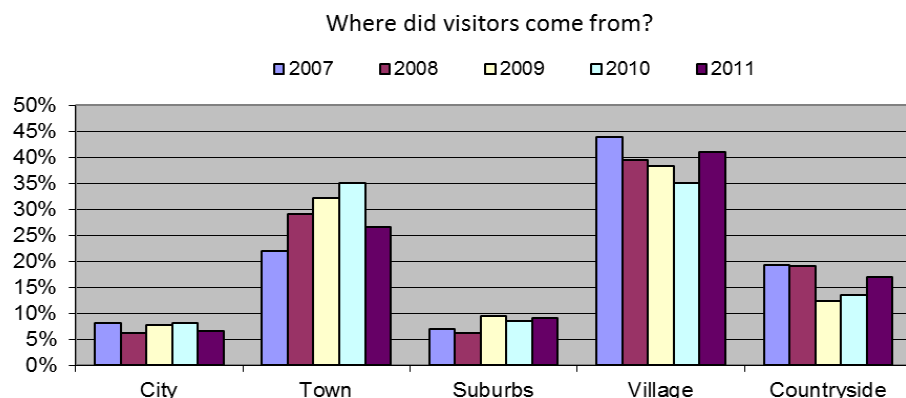
## Increased promotion

There was a real buzz around this year's Open Farm Sunday. Extensive promotion ensured that thousands of people heard about Open Farm Sunday, knew what it was about and how they could visit a farm. The media campaign achieved a **171% increase** in opportunities to see and hear about Open Farm Sunday as it was successfully promoted across printed, online and broadcast media. In the six week run up to Open Farm Sunday, [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) had over **100,000 hits** to the website – almost a **500% increase** on 2010.

# The visitors

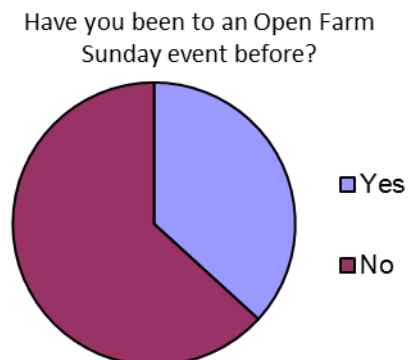
## Where they come from

8% fewer people from cities, towns and suburbs visited events compared with 2010. This may have been a consequence of the bad weather putting people off a day in the countryside.



## Attracting new visitors

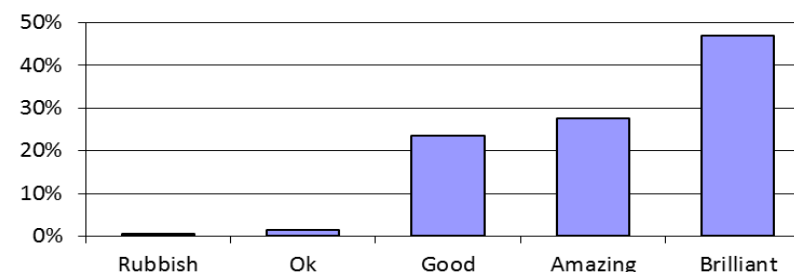
63% of visitors (over 75,000 people) had never been to an Open Farm Sunday event before. However, there was a 10% increase in returning visitors compared with 2010 figures, showing that poor weather did not deter previous Open Farm Sunday visitors.



## How did they rate their day?

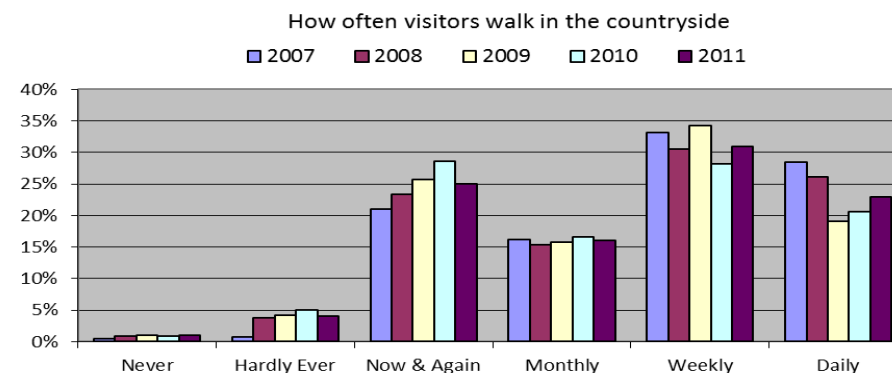
Once again it was a big 'thumbs up' for LEAF's Open Farm Sunday with a stunning 97% of visitors rating the event they visited as 'good', 'amazing' or 'brilliant'. Comments from visitors underline how much they really enjoyed their farm visit and how they appreciate the hard work and time that goes in to putting on such events.

How did visitors rate the event?



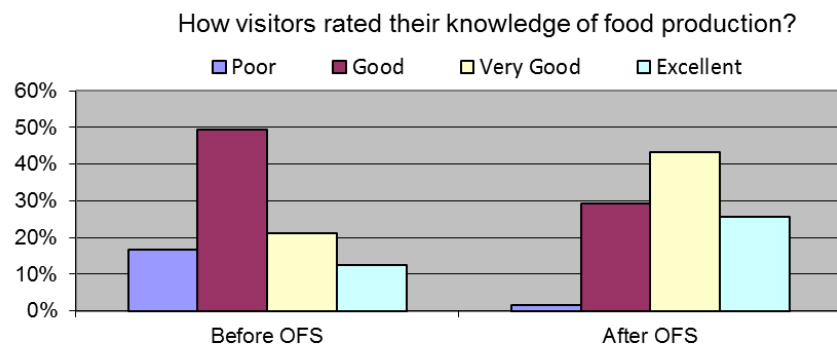
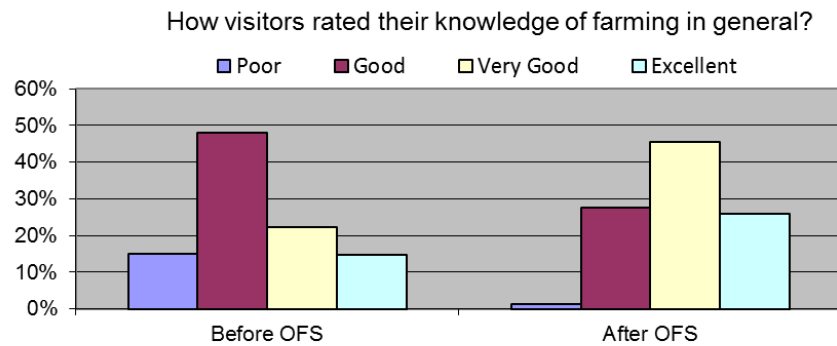
## How often they go to the countryside

30% of visitors reported that they visited the countryside either 'never', 'hardly ever' or only 'now and again' showing that Open Farm Sunday is reaching out to thousands of people not used to venturing onto farms.



## What did they learn?

A key part of Open Farm Sunday is explaining to visitors how their food is produced and how farmers manage the countryside. Once again, after visiting an event there was a clear shift in visitors' understanding of farming and food production from 'poor' or 'good' to 'very good' or 'excellent'.



## What visitors said...

*"Thank you for all the hard work and effort that was put into the day. The demonstrations, displays, equipment and explanations were great. A wonderful opportunity to learn more about farming, the environment and the food chain from farm to fork."*

*"Useful, understandable advice dotted throughout the farm. Knowledgeable people to talk to on hand. A very enjoyable couple of hours."*

*"Wonderful to visit a working farm so close to where we live."*

*"What a wonderful event, I would recommend this to friends and family, and it is in my diary for next year!!"*

*"Went to Burrow Farm and it was a really well organised day. Lots to do for the kids. We had a great time!!!"*

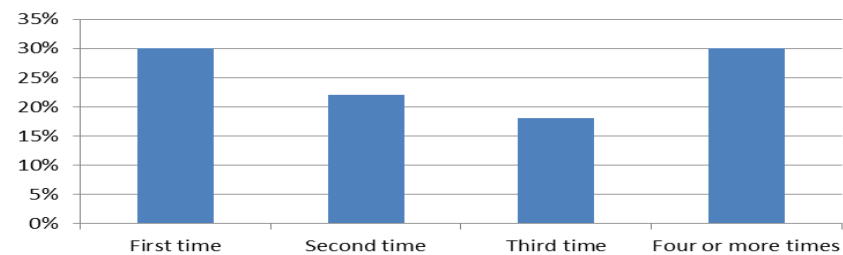
*"It poured with rain all day long but we had a fabulous day - the rain didn't dampen it at all! Huge thanks to the team there for making the day so enjoyable."*

# The host farmers

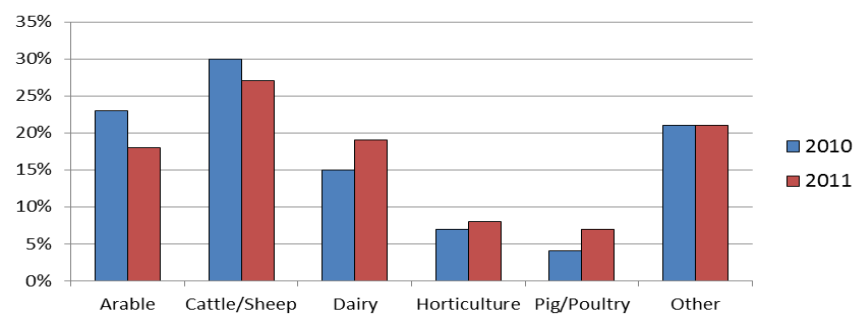
## Who took part?

Farms of every size and type opened up from small family farms to huge farming businesses. It was good to see an increase in the number of farms in Wales opening up.

30% of farmers took part in Open Farm Sunday for the first time.



There was an increase in the number of dairy, horticulture, pig and poultry farms opening up.



Thank you to all our sponsors who encouraged their farmer contacts to participate in Open Farm Sunday.

# Lots to see and do

To boost the range of industries showcased at an event, some farmers invited their neighbours to come along with their equipment, animals and displays.

The following table gives the percentage of farms showcasing each industry area:

Arable	44%
Beef	55%
Dairy	19%
Sheep	58%
Pigs	42%
Poultry	44%
Vegetables	27%
Fruit	20%
Horticulture	19%
Environmental Stewardship	60%

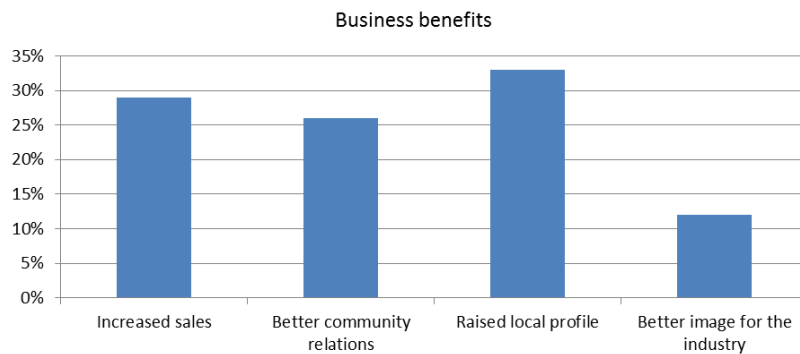
The following table shows the main activities and the percentage of events offering them:

Meet the animals	80%
Self guided farm walk	51%
Hosted farm tour	72%
Trailer ride	44%
Static machinery display	64%
Farm shop / retail	48%
Food	74%



## Business boost

78% of host farmers said they had a real business benefit from hosting an Open Farm Sunday event. The most widely reported benefits were 'raised local profile', 'better community relations', 'increased sales' and 'better image for the industry'.



## Other benefits reported by host farmers

"Improved local relations met some new friends and increased local networks."

"Local people went away with a better understanding about how food is produced."

"Just raising awareness of farming generally. We didn't do it to benefit our business specifically."

"Made our neighbours appreciate more what we do and what we are trying to achieve."

"Increased awareness of our produce and the values that we attribute to our livestock."

## What our host farmers said

"Highly rewarding and the feedback has been extremely positive."

"I feel really proud to talk about the food we produce and the work we do for the environment."

"Materials, support and advice from LEAF were excellent."

"Over 100 visitors on such an atrocious day shows us there is a real interest in food and farming."

"We are very grateful to the sponsors for their support. It adds meaning and professionalism to the event to be supported by big names."

"A very worthwhile event. Shame about the weather but mustn't complain about much needed rain."

"What you and all the other supporting organisations sent us was first class, thank you!"

"I think we learnt as much as our visitors did! It's amazing how little some people know about something we take for granted."

"A great way for us to engage with our customers and other farmers."

"This year's open day was a tremendous success in spite of the naughty weather"

"The day takes a long time to organise, but is well worth it. Thanks and all the best to the LEAF team!"



# Our support for host farmers

## Regional Co-ordinators

For the second year running our team of nine regional co-ordinators did a fantastic job helping host farmers get geared up for the day offering advice and running workshops. They also did a great job promoting Open Farm Sunday across their region, utilising their networks, building links with journalists and working with the local media. Their enthusiasm and hard work really paid off as we saw increasing interest from regional media.



## Changes to HSE guidelines

In March 2011 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issued revised guidelines for farmers with livestock who open their farms to the public, including Open Farm Sunday events. LEAF had fed into the development of the guidelines and they are in line with the information we provided to host farmers. LEAF, with support from the HSE, updated the template risk assessment, host farmer handbook, website and kept host farmers fully informed of the new requirements.

## Workshops

Nearly 200 farmers attended one of the 16 workshops we organised in March and April. Held on farms, these practical training sessions helped host farmers put on safe, engaging and fun events. Topics covered health and safety, promotion, activities and crowd control through to answering tricky questions! Thanks to additional support from Natural England, the workshops also covered 'Beyond Open Farm' to encourage farmers to open their farms for school visits and other groups throughout the year. Farmers really appreciated the opportunity to share experiences and pick up new ideas.

## Website developments

The website [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) is the hub of information for both host farmers and visitors. Updates to the host farmer registration section ensured we had additional information on each Open Farm Sunday event. New icons and the improved search facility helped visitors to quickly select farms to visit. Three new videos were added to the online workshop to help farmers wishing to open their farms beyond Open Farm Sunday.

Search for an Open Farm Sunday event near you:

Address or farm name:

List by region:

Search for your nearest event by entering your postcode and the distance you are willing to travel:

Select any highlights you would like to see at a farm:

<input type="checkbox"/> Hosted farm tour	<input type="checkbox"/> Self guided walks
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet the animals	<input type="checkbox"/> Food is available
<input type="checkbox"/> Trailer rides	<input type="checkbox"/> Farm shop
<input type="checkbox"/> Static machinery display	<input type="checkbox"/> Disabled facilities

**Hollow Trees Farm**

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Telephone: 01449 741247  
Website: [www.hollowtrees.co.uk](http://www.hollowtrees.co.uk)

Highlights:

**Jimmy's Farm**

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Telephone: 08444 938088  
Website: [www.jimmysfarm.com](http://www.jimmysfarm.com)

Highlights:



## Resources

85% of host farmers made use of the resources which we were able to offer free of charge, thanks to the support from our sponsors. The packs of supporting materials included publicity materials (posters, flyers, postcards, gate banner), handbook, polo shirt, stickers, activity booklets and lots more. New for 2011 was the 'Discover More' brochure feature a number of British farmers giving visitors some key facts and figures about UK farming.

Many sponsors also produced additional innovative resources including posters, information leaflets and giveaways. LEAF, John Deere, Frontier Agriculture, Syngenta and Warburtons developed bespoke information and activity handouts. DairyCo, EBLEX, HGCA and NFU distributed their own resource packs direct to host farmers. GrowHow funded the development of a new 'growing/fertiliser' activity. Wiggly Wiggles supported the feedback form and associated prize draw. Warburtons also organised the delivery of fresh bread to their growers who were open on the day! It was also good to know that 89% of host farmers said that they were aware of our sponsors support for Open Farm Sunday.

## Additional activity

This year Shaun the Sheep teamed up with Open Farm Sunday and the Lottery Funded Project, Let Nature Feed Your Senses to support the campaign. Hundreds of Shaun the Sheep reading and colouring books, courtesy of Weetabix, were available for host farmers to hand out on the day as well as useful event signs. We also piloted a new partnership with Barclays where their bank staff helped with on farm charity fundraising. Thank you to Asda for offering raffle prizes.

## Photography competition

We had a lovely selection of photographs to choose the two winners and runners up (adults and young people) in our Open Farm Sunday photography competition. The prizes were kindly donated by Jessops.



# Working with the media

## The campaign

Once again the media campaign was pivotal to the success of Open Farm Sunday. LEAF, working with the PR Agency Ceres, host farmers and sponsors, developed a dynamic and integrated PR campaign which was pivotal to the success of Open Farm Sunday 2011.

A huge range of activity ensured farmers participated in Open Farm Sunday, drove visitors to Open Farm Sunday events whilst also raising general awareness of food and farming and extending industry support. Using the new theme 'Discover Life on Britain's Farms' the campaign gained extensive coverage across the printed, online and broadcast media ensuring that thousands of people were aware of the how to find a farm to visit on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

## Achievements

- 217m opportunities to see and hear (versus 127m in 2010)
- 645 pieces of media coverage
- 149 pieces of national coverage
- 428 pieces of regional coverage
- 84% of consumer print coverage mentioned [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)
- 100,000 hits to the website in two months
- 20,000 visits in one day during the week before 12<sup>th</sup> June
- 40% increase in Twitter fans from March 2011 – June 2011
- Featured on 82 Twitter list

## How did we do it

- BBC's Countryfile TV presenter and farmer, Adam Henson featured in a video for news media; the video went on 30 website including the Mail Online – the largest global news website and reached 40 million people
- National news media was harnessed to increase awareness with a variety of stories, case studies and other tactics
- Exclusive stories were placed with target media including the Daily Mail that showed consumers lack of understanding about the countryside
- Press pack with diary date, photography, 22 farmer profiles, facts and figures and releases with hooks for key media were sent to journalists across the country
- 'Farmtastic' booklet of quirky farming facts were sent out to prime-time radio presenters
- A social media communication programme conversed with bloggers and opinion formers to encourage them to become online 'ambassadors'
- A Facebook group was created where host farmers could discuss Open Farm Sunday and a separate page used for both hosts and visitors
- 24/7 press office run by Ceres





## Growing the online community

Open Farm Sunday Twitter was maintained throughout the campaign providing a hub for online conversation. We were featured on 82 Twitter lists, saw a 40% increase in our followers between March and June, and #ofs trended in some parts of the country on Open Farm Sunday itself.



In the six weeks running up to Open Farm Sunday, **www.farmsunday.org** had over 100 000 visits – 20, 000 hits were achieved on one day when 'Money Saving Expert' Martin Lewis, promoted Open Farm Sunday in his e-newsletter.



## Telling the story of our food

A news story was developed following some research which highlighted how little members of the public know about British wildlife on farms. The Daily Mail were offered this as an exclusive story and it formed the discussion point across all media channels including social media. The story was featured on 30 websites generating 40 million opportunities to see and hear.

## Highlights for 2011

- Fantastic mentions on the Archers before and after Open Farm Sunday
- Coverage on ITV's morning shows and Chris Evans and Steve Wright shows on Radio 2
- Shaun the Sheep Facebook, which has over 100,000 followers, promoted Open Farm Sunday and a competition to be a VIP farmer for the day
- On message news story and video supported by BBC's Countryfile presenter and farming champion Adam Henson
- Case studies of the media show-casing the diversity of farms in Britain and the brilliant work farmers do.
- 84% of consumer print coverage mentioned farmsunday.org compared to 67% in 2010





# Thank you!

## To all our sponsors

A huge thank you to all our sponsors, without whose support, both financial and in-kind, Open Farm Sunday simply would not have happened. Their help enabled us to provide fantastic resource packs, run a national media campaign, organise workshops and develop the website. Our sponsors also helped promote Open Farm Sunday to all their contacts and helping out at events. A massive thank you to all of them!



## To all our host farmers

It is the enthusiasm, dedication, energy and sheer hard work of our host farmers that makes LEAF's Open Farm Sunday such a special day in the farming calendar. It is a day for the whole farming industry to be proud of. A heartfelt thank you to our farmers, their families, friends and neighbours who did such an amazing job to showcase everything that makes our industry so unique.

## The help and support we received from sponsors helped LEAF to:

- Organise 16 workshops across the UK to provide host farmers and helpers with the skills to hold successful Open Farm Sunday events
- Set up and co-ordinate a team of nine regional co-ordinators to help host farmers get geared up for the day, offering advice and helping out at workshops
- Produce a range of publicity material for host farmers including flyers, posters, postcard, road side banners and polo shirts
- Produce help and guidance such as a host farmers handbook and activities booklet.
- Generate media coverage by working with PR agency, Ceres to run the national Open Farm Sunday press office
- Produce a promotional video featuring Adam Henson to use in on-line promotion of Open Farm Sunday
- Update the Open Farm Sunday website to include new images, case studies and an improved registration system giving clearer information about host farms so visitors could search by farm types and activities
- Produce the 'Discover More' booklet giving visitors some key facts and figures about UK farming.



## **Be part of the success!**

### **Get involved in Open Farm Sunday 2012**

Open Farm Sunday 2012 is on the 17<sup>th</sup> June. There are lots of ways to get involved:

- If you are a farmer, register your event at [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) from the 10th January 2012, or help out at someone else's event.
- Help promote Open Farm Sunday and encourage other farmers to get involved, particularly those who have not done it before.
- Become a sponsor – LEAF's Open Farm Sunday has become a key part of the farming calendar. Be part of it and help us make next year's Open Farm Sunday even bigger and better!

**[www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org)**