

Ag Tourism Tips

If you are planning an event for National Emu Week (N.E.W). consider some of these tips for making it an enjoyable time for your visitors.

Wisconsin Agriculture Secretary Ben Brancel at a LUV-R-AG event, urged Wisconsin Agri Tourism Association (WATA) members to “**create a positive atmosphere** for those who come to visit their agritourism business.” Secretary Brancel continued, “Create an atmosphere where visitors are excited, where they are happy and where they enjoy it. And make sure it’s multi-generational. Make it fun for kids, their parents and the senior citizens that visit your farm.”

When visitors arrive at your farm, make an effort to **make them feel welcome**. Dress in clean clothes and always smile. Tell them you are happy they are here and what a wonderful opportunity it is for you to be able to share information about your farm. NEVER make them feel like they are intruding or that there is somewhere else that you would rather be. Don’t keep looking at your watch or fiddling with your jewelry. Give them your full attention

When visitors first drive in for their tour appointment, **say out loud to yourself, “IT’S SHOW TIME!”** This will get you ready to gear up for the tour. It is up to you, the farm representative, to make this an enjoyable visit. Most people are several generations away from any real knowledge of the farm. This is an opportunity to let them know how farms operate and how animals are cared for.

Answer questions truthfully and admit it, if you do not know the answer. **Craft a story unique to your farm.** Every farm has a piece of history or an amusing story that can be shared with your visitors. Maybe a bald eagle circled your farm and landed in a nearby tree, or a gate came open and you had animals staring at you through the kitchen window as you drank your morning coffee. Maybe, you saw an owl perched on the roof of your barn one evening.

I like to tell visitors about our first year with our 4 emus, Fred, Wilma, Betty and Barney. Wilma got raccoon brain worm as a yearling and died. Betty took up with Fred. We had a regular Peyton Place going on. When we added 9 more birds the following year no one would pair up. We turned them all out into the pasture and waited for them to bed down together. Once they paired up, we slowly escorted them through the gate and into the breeder pens. Twenty years later we still had some of those original birds paired up in those same pens.

If you have trees, plants, vegetables or flowers, do some research and **know what variety they are**. Someone is bound to ask and they will be very impressed, if you can answer their questions.

Try to look at your farm through your visitor’s eyes and **determine what would be the most interesting to them**. Maybe a non-farm friend could help with this. The more unique you make your farm-tour, the more people will remember it.

How will you know if you are doing a good job? Some visitors will come right out and tell you. Others will return with family or friends. The best way to know that you are doing a good job is when you start to have visitors who were recommended by those who had been there previously. And, of course, you can always ask them before they leave, if they enjoyed the tour.

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