



FARM AND FACILITY TOUR TIPS

Before the classes arrive:

- Have a plan to control the tour. Divide the group up so that there is adult supervision in all groups. Set a limit on the number of kids coming so that the group isn't too large to manage.
- Recruit help if the group is large. Ask neighbors, family members, local FFA members or FFA Alumni members to help with the tours. Explain your expectations of their presentation or role in the tour.
- If you have people helping you with the tours, give them "talking points" about the farm or the area they are responsible for. (i.e. number of acres, crops raised, number of cows, where does the milk get shipped to). A map or layout of the farm or stations they'll be rotating in is also helpful.
- Talk with the teacher about their expectations and time limits. This will determine how much you can show the students, how much time they will have on the farm, and what detail you can go into.
- Check with your insurance company about your farm liability coverage.
- Find out if there are any special needs or other information you need to be aware of about any of the students. Wheel chair accessibility, food or animal allergies, and student behavior may require you to have someone work directly with that student.
- You may want to work with teachers to have a worksheet for the kids to fill out when they get back to school on things they have learned. You may also help the teacher think of good quiz questions.
- Take time to clean up walkways and other places that the class may tour. Most kids don't have "barn shoes" to wear on field trips so help the bus driver and teacher out by walking kids through dry and clean areas.
- If the class will be there for an extended amount of time, the need for restroom accessibility or portable toilets may be necessary.
- Plan ahead for weather related factors - what if it rains, snows or is really muddy?

When classes visit your farm:

- Keep it simple. Be sure to explain any terms that kids might not understand. Make your presentation age appropriate – younger students won't understand rations, but high school students probably will. Avoid using too many statistics.
- Another way to manage the groups is to have different "stations" on the farm that the students rotate to. Plan to have a group leader lead the students from station to station. Stations may include the milk house, silo room, calf barn, milking barn or parlor, office, machine shed, etc.
- Have as many samples and hands-on experiences as you can. Students will remember more if they can hold, touch, feel or smell something. But be sure to keep safety in mind and have hand washing areas available!
- Show the kids the positive side of agriculture. Use discretion when explaining some farm practices. Don't dwell on the negative issues or things that can go wrong.

- Have a supply of paper towels, rags or other cleaning materials that is handy for the accidents (i.e. manure or mud on shoes).
- Once you start something, plan to do it with the whole group! If one student wants to sit on a tractor, plan that all the students will want to! Keep items like this in mind when planning your time schedule.

Keep safety in mind

- Don't allow kids to go in places where there are open chutes, augers running or other hazards.
- Consider hanging tools, electric fences, manure pits, chemicals, and sharp objects are kept and keep students from those areas. Consider closing off areas with rope or tape to encourage students to stay out of an area.
- If you are going to demonstrate something with a piece of equipment or machinery, insure that a safe distance is kept between the students and the demonstration. Make sure an adult is watching for any hazards and can alert the operator to stop.
- Control the student's access to animals. Review where the animals are (i.e. pens, stanchions, free stalls, hutches) and how the students can see them without being in danger of being kicked, run over, or stepped on. Use your best judgment.

Serving food and Bio-safety concerns:

- If you pass things out to eat, keep it simple and fast. Some kids take forever to eat! You should also consult with the teacher about any food allergies and have an alternative snack for those children.
- Keep food and animals separate. If you are having the students around calves, manure, or recently freshened cows, it is important to have an area for hand washing.
- Consider serving any food products before the group tours the farm. You should still offer hand washing areas even if they just got off the bus.
- Special care is needed with small children that can't keep their hands out of their mouth or who don't understand the importance of washing hands before they put food into their mouth. This can be an issue with pre-school and daycare children.
- Don't serve any raw, un-pasteurized milk or any dairy products made from raw milk. Each year people get sick from this and there are certain groups of people (young kids under the age of five, pregnant women, the elderly and people with damaged or weakened immune systems) that are more at-risk from these products.
- Keep all tour guests away from sick animals.
- Check with other resources for current bio-security and farm safety suggestions.

Follow-up and other information

- If you are sending items back with the kids (cups, erasers, stickers), ask the teacher about putting them in a bag and send with the teacher to avoid problems on the bus.
- If any students or teachers had questions and you said you'd find out the answer, don't forget to follow-up on a timely basis.
- A short note to the teacher and class thanking them for visiting your operation and commenting on their questions, good behavior or other points, is always nice.