

## Property Management & Public Access

Farm and ranch recreational enterprises provide a unique opportunity to both supplement farm income and educate the non-farm public about agriculture. Recreational activities can be suitable for the small farm, a large ranching operation, and an entire rural community.

In developing a recreational enterprise, you will need to determine the extent of public access to your property and what types of activities you will provide.

Recreational enterprises need not be a full-length vacation. You may want to begin with one-hour tours and half-day excursions, depending on the attractions you feel your property and operation provide (be sure to review your inventory checklist), your time commitment, and your philosophy and goals about adding a recreational component to your operation.

In general, visitors prefer activities rather than to simply observe a farm or ranch. You will need to create an environment where they can experience activities, or provide opportunities for self-directed recreation (fishing, hunting, canoeing, etc.). For example, one of the most wonderful visitor activities is hand-feeding calves or lambs.

Take advantage of natural settings and scenic areas for locating activities, capitalizing on historic aspects of the farm or ranch as well. If you have a century Farm, put up a sign and promote it in your advertising and brochures (see MARKETING section). Does your farm or ranch border old mining claims, the Oregon Trail, or Indian paths? If so, tell the story.

### Property Appearance

Quality attractions and activities are important. Quality means facilities that are pleasing and neat in appearance as well as interesting. Pick up the barnyard, paint the fence, and add some colorful flowers. Be authentic; don't bring in new modular buildings if you have existing buildings that can be renovated.

Of course, you can't change everything. Some farm odors are unavoidable. Consider a clever sign that says, "Odor on this farm smells like money."

### Location & Access

A remote location can be an asset if marketed correctly. But make it easy for visitors to find you. Provide clear and simple directions in all printed materials and place a sign at the front of the driveway to make it obvious to guests that they are at the right place. Keep driveways graded and set up parking locations near the activity site. If guests arrive after dark, light the signage and driveway.

Here are a few more ideas:

1. Provide more sophisticated facilities. Relatively more senior citizens and elderly are looking for better facilities than in the past.
2. Solitude! This is highly marketable, especially since solitude in many state and national parks is virtually impossible now.
3. Security. This is also highly marketable.
4. Reservations and access. This should be an advantage because some public sector recreation opportunities are so limited that waiting lists of several months are common.
5. Service to special constituencies. Provide access and services to physically and mentally impaired.
6. Education. Private sector can provide guide services, tours, and special experiences. Photographic opportunities, especially for foreigners, are also a possibility.
7. Nurturing activities. City people may be especially good clients for experiences such as gardening, harvesting fruit, or other outdoor agricultural activities.
8. Memberships in campsites, hunting, or lodging arrangements.
9. Visual qualities. The more natural amenities a site possesses, the less development and monetary risk is needed. Pick your sites carefully.