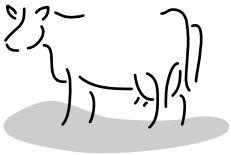
TIPS•FOR•TOURS

Farm Tour Tips for Producers



BRITISH COLUMBIA INVESTMENT AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION

British Columbia Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Agriculture and Food

This document has been compiled by the
British Columbia Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation

1767 Angus Campbell Road
Abbotsford, BC V3G 2M3
Tel: 604 556-3088
Fax: 604 556-3030

in cooperation with:

British Columbia Investment Agriculture
and
British Columbia Minstry of Agriculture and Food

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Annette Moore BCMAFF
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How to Market Your Farm for Tours!

In order to come they have to first know who you are and what you have to offer them in terms of their curriculum. Information about your farm can be shared in a:

- brochure;
- flyer;
- newsletter.

Direct

For school tours, tourists, or other institutions, the method of notification will vary:

- make direct contact in September with schools;
- mail-out; (Only consider schools within a 1 hour travel radius.);
- visit school principal with information package. Offer to visit the school on career days.

In-direct

Provide advertising brochures, flyers, newsletters to those groups who may receive queries on available farms for tours. Encourage them to visit your farm on their own or during a tour. Sources of potential referrals are:

- producer association, farm women's network, education support groups, BC Dairy Foundation;
- work with Agriculture in the Classroom;
- local Chamber of Commerce.

Knowing Your Audience

Tip: During the Visit
Class supervision is necessary during the entire visit. Don't be afraid to make rules for their safety around animals, machinery, equipment and structures.

Knowing what to expect will help you to plan your tour accordingly in terms of:

- time at each activity or area
- depth and breadth of information.

To do this requires some help from the teacher in terms of what they are focusing on in class and the skill levels of the class. To provide you some preliminary assistance:

Grades	Student Behavior	Materials/Activities
Grades 1-2	Warm, receptive, excitable, shifting attention	Visuals important, puzzling objects grab interest
Grades 3-4	Attentive, keen, more able to focus on the topic, able to sit and attend for longer periods	Short speeches OK puzzles/ problem solving or riddles possible
Grades 5-7	Independent learners, outgoing, can be opinionated, limited social graces, argumentative, practical, ask questions	Able to think beyond themsleves—more emphasis on global thinking, hands-on activities
Grades 7-9	Teenagers, sometimes lively, social not inclined to ask question. More teacher participation. Students likely to bring pre-prepared questions	Informal or structured activities, cooperational activites possible
Grades 10-12	Young adults. More likely to ask questions and likely to come with prepared questions. Questions will be more sophisticated and pointed to an issue	Problem solving, extrapola-tion of ideas, more complex structures and their implications possible

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Grade K-1
Life Science - Science

- Describe the appearance and behaviour of a variety of animals
- Determine the requirements of healthy plants and animals
- Identify the stages in the life cycle of an animal
- Demonstrate how plants and other organic mate rial can be recycled back into the environment

Grade 2/3
Science-Life Science (Animals in the Environment)

- Compare and contrast different types of animal life cycles
- Compare and contrast plant and animal life cycles
- Describe structures that enable animals to survive in different conditions

Social Studies Society and Culture

- Describe ways members of a community meet one another's needs
- Identify contributions of various occupations to BC's communities
- Describe how technology affects individuals and communities
- Describe the historical development of various BC communities

Grade 4
Science-Life Science (Body Systems and Digestion)

- Compare and contrast the digestive systems of humans and various animals
- Describe the basic structure and function of the organs involved in digestion

Earth and Space Science –Water

- Categorize the various uses of water
- Outline the importance of water to life
- Describe human impacts on the Earth's water resources

Social Studies Environment

- Analyze how people interact with their environment in the past and in the present
- Demonstrate an understanding of why immigrants come to Canada, the challenges they face and their contributions to Canada

Grade 5
Science-Life Science (BC's Living Resources)

- Identify living resources in the local environment
- Describe how humans use BC's living resources
- Describe the known and potential environmental impacts of using BC's living resources
- Devise a strategy for sustaining a living resource

Applications of Science

- Describe the technologies that allow humans to extend their natural abilities
- Identify ways that science is used responsibly in their communities

Social Studies Economy and Technology

- Analyze the relationship between the development of communities and their available resources

Environment

- Demonstrate an understanding of sustainability, steward ship, and renewable versus non renewable natural resources
- Assess effects of lifestyles and industries on local and global environments

Society and Culture

- Demonstrate understanding of why immigrants come to Canada, the challenges they face and their contribution to Canada

Grade 10
Social Studies Economy and Technology Canada 1815-1914

- Identify factors that contributed to the economy of BC (What did the activity entail? How did it contribute to the local and provincial economies? Did the industry expand or decrease? What were the career opportunities?

Environment (Canada from 1815 to 1914)

- Identify key local and provincial resource development issues from 1815 to the present, considering the concepts of stewardship and sustainability

Saftey First

Barn Safety

Keep in mind that the farm is home to you but is unfamiliar territory to be discovered for urban children or their teachers. They are likely not to be fully aware of any of the potential dangers.

To prepare the farm for visitors, both for safety and good image, the following efforts are some examples of safety tips to insure a successful and safe visit:

- hose down walkways;
- keep all passages and stairways safe and unobstructed.- where possible install railings;
- check for nails, loose railings, syringes, sharp tools, loose tin/ siding, etc.;
- keep sick or dangerous animals out of the way;
- remove access to the dog(s);
- rope off areas where you don't want them to go. But don't rely on the rope to keep them out. Choose spotters and/or clearly inform the teachers, supervisors that these areas are unsafe or inaccessible;
- inform your staff of the visitors;
- never leave any toxic products (sanitizers, pesticides) open and accessable;
- shut off all machinery or if can't, avoid areas where machinery is in operation. Remove all keys from tractor ignitions;
- do not encourage children to have direct interaction with animals. If any interaction is allowed be certain they are gentle animals housed in a way that controls their movement.

Tip: Check with your Direct Farm Marketing Association for tour liability insurance.

Insurance Needs and Liability

It is critical that you check your liability coverage with your insurance company prior to the visit. Most farm policies do NOT cover farm tours or consumer farm days. Be prepared to go over your tour plan and potential risks that are possible. Be clear on what monetary charges, if any, that may be applied to the visit and if any food or products will be dispensed. Keep your agent informed of any changes machinery or equipment used and the frequency of visits.

Food Safety

It is a much appreciated bonus if your farm is capable of providing a snack, particularly if it is a product that originates from your farm. However to insure no food borne illnesses result there are some precautions that should be taken.

- Provide a facility that all children can wash their hands (soap and warm water).
- Serve only processed, packaged products. The benefits are many:
    1. it demonstrates the processing aspect of the product and allows for product recognition off the farm;
    3. it reduces the risk of potential food safety issues;
    4. provides an opportunity to talk about your industry's food safety and quality controls.
- Serve plain products—children's tastes are more simple than adults. Fancy flavors, spices or appearances may result in a negative response.
- **It is the responsibility of the teacher not the producer to know his/her students' medical needs (ie: allergies to nuts, hay, or bees).**

Your Farm Your Industry

School children are future milk buyers. Making a positive impression about dairy farming has the potential to shift future consumption trends.You, as a dairy producer play an important part in communicating key messages about agriculture and the food produced for everyone. You are an expert at taking care of detailed business decisions, cows and crops, land stewardship, etc, but may not be trained in public speaking and public relations. Doing some homework ahead of time can help you say and do the right things.

Food is not created at the super market, yet many school children believe that this is where their food comes from. The challenge for farm tour guides is to change this misconception. You can in fact inspire consumer confidence and spur on milk consumption. To ensure the paradigm is changed positively requires several things:

- Facilities and housing that is maintained in a manner that represents a clean, healthy environment that is both comfortable and healthy for the cows and workers.
- The farm represents the "norm" of the industry and dispels the "Old MacDonald's Farm" myth. Don't be afraid to show

Tip:
Relate words such as, hay, rations, forage, heifer, to their everyday activities.

that yours is a professional operation that provides employment and food.

- Avoid circumstances on the farm that would reflect negatively on dairy farmers or the industry in general – e.g. dead calf left out in the open. The visit is a window into the entire industry.
- Always, present milk as natures most wholesome food with the highest food value.

Always remember the only animal most people relate to is their pet. The environment and people involved with their pet will be their own home or friends, the small animal veterinarian and the local pet store. Either way it is a singular unit, treated as one of the family members and potentially pampered in a very human-like manner.

The level of smell, "dirt" and size of the farming operation will seem foreign. Images of farming may have come from story books or television and as a result may be dated, small, mixed farming operations or large "corporate" farms using "bad" chemicals, that pollute or taint the air/water/soil/milk/meat. How you and the farm presents itself can change this and encourage them to think in a better more positive light.

Preparing for the Visit

Knowing before hand, both the teacher and yourself, what sequence of stops and the points addressed at each stop will help in providing a successful tour. Plan in advance:

- where will they go;
- what will they do;
- what will they see
- how will you address their questions;
- how will you assure supervision and safety throughout the time of their visit.

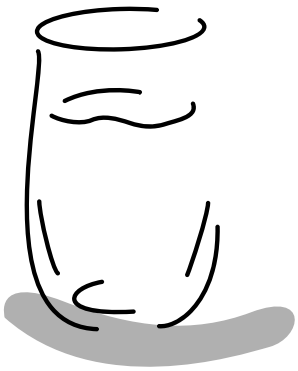
Base your plan on your barn layout, taking advantage of any shelters, and natural collection areas. Consider the size of the areas, age of the children, experience of the supervisors and the degree of risk and/or complexity of any tasks.

Tip: Keep it Simple

It's sometimes too easy to fall into the trap of telling them everything you know. Remember these children will not know farm language and terms and the message has to be simple and basic. Pick just one or two things that you want the children to learn at different locations of the farm. Talk in terms that children can understand, for example:

- one cow drinks 112.5 to 225 litres (25 to 50 gallons) of water each day – or enough to fill a bathtub

- if a cow produces 31 litres (70 lbs) milk per day that equals 36.5 litres (8.1 gallons) per cow per day



Information Sharing Form

For the teacher to fill out.

Before the Tour

- Pre-Visit the farm and go over tour plan if possible
- Pre-payment of contract
- Arrangement of specific activities or achievement of specific goals

Things the farmer needs to know

- Teacher's name_____
- School_____
- Contact #_____
- Age level of the group_____
- Number of children and supervisors (does not include one teacher per class)

Children_____ Supervisors_____

Recommended ratios of children to adults:

1. *Primary (kindergarten-Grade 3): 6 children to 1 adult*
2. *Intermediate (Grades 4-7): 10 children to 1 adult*
3. *Secondary (Grades 8-12): supervisors if any children with special needs or behaviour problems*

- Topics the teacher would like introduced

_____

_____

_____

_____

- If there are any special needs children (e.g. wheel chair accessibility) or children with allergies (e.g. hay allergies)

_____

_____

_____

- What are the hours, days or months that the visit is preferred_____

For the farmer to fill out.

Things the teacher needs to know

- Name of farm_____
- Contact name_____
- Contact #_____
- Type of farm_____

_____

_____

- What specific time limitations are there (e.g. they must be gone by 2 pm before milking)

_____

_____

- Appropriate clothing (e.g. rubber boots, jackets, rain gear, etc.) required

_____

_____

- Restrictions on group sizes. If they will need to be divided into supervised smaller groups

_____

_____

- Any monetary charges for visit or for snacks (e.g. cartons of milk)_____

_____

- Contract required: yes ❑ no ❑

Location of the farm

- Provide a map with a clearly marked route. Indicate distance from the school.
- The type of parking facilities and distance to the assembly area—is there capacity for cars (car pooling) or buses.
- Where to assemble upon arrival

Develop "Activity Stations"

Developing "activity stations" are a great way to focus school age children and their energies as well as provide them some tremendous hands-on experiences. All learners, children and adults, like a break from listening to actually doing something. Challenging their skills and observations helps to consolidate what they've learned. Always keep in mind safety, and complexity as it relates to the age of the child and group size.

Activities

The following offers some example activities. Discuss your plans with the teacher before the visit.

Tip: Remember safety features - fenced wagon, bales to sit on, steps in place to ensure easy on/off. Consider bad weather options.

- Hay wagon ride to tour fields.
    1. Corn—tell them how it is used to feed the cattle; show the entire plant and how it looks chopped up as feed; grows to a height of 10-12'; when chopped up is placed in a silo to ferment (preserve) for future feeding.
    2. Pumpkins—pick pumpkins, grow different varieties.
    3. Handle soil—if possible show different types of soil; tell that it provides nutrients to plants, valuable resource and needs to be protected; demonstrate how erosion may be controlled.
- Separate off an area with rope, garden hose or tape and have smaller, more gentle animals in small pens accessible for petting or feeding. Always supervise—both for sake of child and animal.
- Viewing area of all farm structures—note the different designs and their purpose.
- Milking demonstration—make use of portable chutes to insure containment of the cow. Always choose the most gentle and cleanest of animals not easily spooked by sudden noises or activities.
- "Teachable moments"—take advantage of events that can occur, eg.: birthing process, breeding, arrival of the milk truck, etc. Be prepared to answer questions though! Discuss these potential topics with teacher beforehand to determine if appropriate.
- Have price tag on items—e.g. tractor, barn, cow.

- Role play
    1. Using props have them guess how many career roles are on a farm, e.g.:
        - wrench = mechanic;
        - grain ration = nutritionist;
        - syringe (minus the needle) = vet;
        - milk sample bag = bulk milk grader / processor.
- Using items from around the farm help students discover their use. Keep safety in mind when selecting tools. Some examples of appropriate tools are:
    1. teat dip;
    2. cow magnet;
    3. milking unit;
    4. chemical gloves;
    5. computer feeding tag;
    6. slow moving vehicle sign.
- Dress-up. In a large box place a collection of farm "uniform" /clothing (steel-toed boots, overalls, caps, quilted jackets, gloves).
    1. Dress the teacher or a student to be a farmer.
    2. Have them say why the farmers wear these - outline safety issues.
- Have a collection of mail: farm magazines, milk cheque (copy) repair bills, vet bills, feed bills, breeding catalogue, farm implement brochures, notices of meetings, 4-H materials, computer printouts etc.
    1. Have them look through the material and discuss what skills you would need to address the issues, e.g. accounting, science, business, communication.
- Test their knowledge with a game of farm trivia pursuit, e.g.:
    1. how many glasses of milk will one cow provide in her lifetime (200,000);
    2. how many stomachs does have cow have (4).
- Challenge their observations!
- Soil —get each child to pick up a scoop of soil from the field. Get the children to think about the world and how much of that scoop of soil represents agriculture.
    1. Drop 3/4 of the handful = amount of world covered in water.
    2. Drop 1/2 of remainder = amount of the land not suitable for agriculture.

3. Drop 1/3 of remainder = amount of land lost to urbanization.
4. Remainder = agri land. Ask for some forecasts about food production in the future.

- Count to 4—in the time that this is done someone in the world has died of hunger.
- Form a food chain—start off with two children, one the producer and one the consumer (eating ice cream!)– get the children to form a chain between the first two children, but in order to become part of the chain they have to mention someone who works between the producer and the ice cream consumer. Have the producer leave the chain and ask them what happens to all those in the chain.

1. Identify all the types of feed—on a large clean surface (e.g. concrete pad) place some feed samples.
2. Have them point out the different piles of feed types – identify them with their help.
3. Divide them into grain versus forage – smell, taste the different grains.
4. Discuss how much a cow eats in a day in terms of weight, buckets.
5. Older children could identify the percentage of each feed type.

Above All – Have FUN !

Meeting the Group at the Bus

Tip: set aside an area that would be appropriate for a group photo – think of farm image and how it will look to a consumer.

Keep your discussion brief. Remember the children may have been on the bus for awhile and will be anxious. Take them right to the first station and do your introductions there. Divide the students into manageable groups (5-10) with an adult supervisor. Be prepared with additional staff if necessary.

- Introduce yourself and your business.
- Let them know this is your place of work and your home.
- State your rules and your expectations. Adults are to listen carefully and be a part of the tour.
- Remember to speak clearly for everyone to hear.
- Have yourself and your staff attired in clean clothes.
- Remind them that loud noises and sudden movements will frighten the livestock and potentially create dangers for themselves and impair production outputs for you.
- Always be on the lookout for potential hazards. Remember, what may seem obvious to you as a danger, may not be to them.
- Students or teacher/supervisors may want to collect memories, for example they may:
    1. take pictures for school displays. If you want some pictures, drawings or stories written by the children ask —they are usually happy to comply;
    2. group photo—choose an appropriate place, taking into consideration background and the resulting image;
    3. tape sounds;
    4. take samples of feed, hay.

Summary and Evaluation of Tour

Maintaining your clients and ensuring positive word of mouth references, requires continual improvements. To evaluate the success of the tour and where you could improve ask the group before they leave:

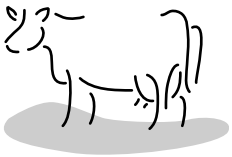
- what they remember and what they learned;
- what they liked and did not like;
- invite them to write a story, letter or draw a picture about your farm and the visit.

Let's Talk About It!

Most people now are 2 and 3 generations removed from their farming roots. Concepts about agriculture rely on stories that may be years old, myths or from the news media. Awareness of how farms function will be a mixture of new and old, and issue oriented. To minimize confusion, be frank, brief and clear when answering questions.

The following touches on some of the areas and the types of information that will be of interest. Depth and specific topics will vary with your own comfort level and with the age of the children and the class subject matter. Discuss this with the teacher before they arrive to allow you some time to prepare.

Cows



- Are mammals warmblooded, have hair or fur, they nurse their young and give birth to their young
- Are herbivores: have flat teeth, eat plants and have their eyes at the sides of their head to watch for predators
- How dairy cows differ from beef cows
- Numbers of different types of dairy cows
- Are a ruminant, they have 4 stomachs, chew cud
- Difference between calf (baby), heifer (teenager), cow (adult)
- How you identify them – name, number, ear tag, etc.

Cow Nutrition

- What they eat and how food is delivered to the cows
- Importance of water and minerals
- Care they require.

Cow Reproduction

- First calf at 2 years of age
- Requires a cow to have a calf to make milk
- Lactation cycle 10 months and then rest (dry) for 2 months

Milking Cows

- Care and technology needed to milk cows
- How the milking system works (flow – where is it going, how it is cooled)
- How milk is never touched by human hands

- Importance of hygiene
- Cow psychology, e.g. pecking order, personalities
- High quality milk comes from high quality animals and farming —be proud to be a farmer

Role of Support Organizations (Older Children)

- Milk Marketing System
- Producer organizations
- Processors
- Agri-business (feed, equipment, etc)
- Veterinarians
- Research

Manure Storage

- Waste—good and bad / soil conditioner and pollutant – how the farmer makes it work
- Waste Act—inpacts on manure applications and how the farmer has to deal with this
- Nutrient cycle of manure in the soil – what does it do?
- Compare to human waste recycling programs

Environment

- Land conservation / stewardship
- Water resources / quality
- Pollution – manure / odors

Animal Care

- Understanding animal needs
- Based on sound and humane management practices
- Cow comfort – freedom of free stalls, types of bedding, pasture vs confined housing

Farming as a Business

- Labor issues
- "Manufacturing" farming – corporate farming vs family farming / small farms vs large farms
- Source of many jobs both direct and indirect – types of jobs both on and off the farm
- How to get into farming

Safety

- Food
  1. Growth hormones used or not—BST is illegal in Canada
  2. Genetically modified organisms—do you have any?
  3. Organic vs. nonorganic
  4. Bacterial contamination—e.g. E.coli105
- Human
  1. Farm accidents
  2. Labor related

Science and Technology

- Computers – business (accounting), feed, breeding, production records, etc
- Robotics – milking parlors
- Genetics – plant and animal related
- Equipment – milking system
- Ecological network – delicate balance of nature – soil, water, air – body and environment interactions – land stewardships
- Biology – life and reproductive cycle of cow/crops

Milk and Nutrition

- Milk meeting daily food requirements
- Milk vs other beverages

Society—Urban/ Rural, Global and Cultural Issures

- Effect of food trends on farming—e.g. multiple component pricing, butterfat consumption
- Rural meets urban—expectations, conflicts
- Global marketplace—e.g. GATT/NAFTA/WTO