

Ag Education Ideas for Open Agri-tourism and Open Farm Days

How do you make a visit more “educational?”

One common learning theory is that people have different learning styles: visual, kinesthetic/tactile or auditory. Many of us teach by talking, which helps auditory learners. By adding visuals and opportunities for movement and touch, you can reach more learners, more effectively.

Tip #1 – Hands-on activities help people learn.

About 30% of people have a “kinesthetic” or “tactile” learning style. That means that they learn more when they are moving, when they get to try things themselves and when they can touch things. Just being able to walk around visiting the farm is helpful for this type of learner. Here are some ideas to help kinesthetic learners during their visit to your farm:

- If you are talking about different types/qualities of seeds and grains, have some set out in pails that they can look at and touch.
- If you are talking about steps you take to improve soil quality, have buckets of high quality soil and poor quality (or just dirt) so they can see and feel the difference.
- If you are talking about specific equipment you use, have it available for them to touch (if it is safe, of course!)

Tip #2 – Visuals help people learn.

Visual learning is the most common learning style, with about 40% of us preferring this learning this way. These people retain information better when they see key words, charts, graphics and photos. Here are some ideas for integrating visuals into your tours:

- Take photos of the farm throughout the year and have them on display so visitors can compare then/now – especially for crops. Showing the process of harvest, the equipment used and a breakdown of the process.
- Make a poster/chart of the supply chain for your farm. What do you need to bring onto your farm and where do you source it? (feed, fertilizers, water, equipment, seeds,) Where does your product go once you have grown/raised it? Does it require processing? Where does the product end up?

Tip#3 – People remember information that they can relate to.

All learners are able to retain more information if they can connect it to their life experiences and prior learning. Wherever possible, provide examples that people can relate and connect to.

- When you discuss “farm receipts” most city people don’t know what that means. If you can compare the size of your farm with an average business – the farm receipts for my farm would be similar to that of X type of business.
- Many city people have only experienced animals as pets. By discussing the 5 freedoms, you can show how you care for farm animals humanely even though they serve a different role in our lives than pets.

Tip #4 – Have activities ready for groups who are waiting for a tour.

If you are busy elsewhere and a bunch of people arrive, you can have self-directed activities ready for them. Handouts/information/games in Ziploc bags at various places on the farm can provide context, history and information that people can read if you are busy elsewhere. People can use them then pin them back up where they found them.