

ALBERTA OPEN FARM DAYS

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Getting Started: Planning Calendar

AlbertaOpenFarmDays.ca

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Alberta Open Farm Days is a collaborative, province-wide, two-day event that gives Albertans an opportunity to experience the farm and understand where their food comes from. It is a backstage pass to meet the farmer and experience agri-tourism in Alberta.

Open Farm Days will take place during the third weekend of August each year. Our goal is to showcase Alberta's agriculture and tourism industry in a fun, engaging, and meaningful manner to participants of all ages.

Guests are welcome to visit participating farms where farmers and ranchers can share stories, demonstrations, and information about how they grow their food. The weekend will also consist of culinary events and experiences where our hosts partner with chefs to give visitors a taste of what local food is all about.

The Open Farm Days team is here to help.

If you should have any questions while planning your event, please feel free to contact us.

info@albertaopenfarmdays.ca, 780 427 2174

AlbertaOpenFarmDays.ca



PLANNING CALENDAR

TIMELINE

CONSIDERATIONS

4-6 MONTHS OUT

- P Plan your event
- P Find helpers
- P Notify your insurance provider
- P Community Partnerships

3 MONTHS OUT

- P Order your FREE resources
- P Book porta-potties
- P Organize refreshments (optional)
- P Check that your event is online at www.albertaopenfarmdays.ca

1-2 MONTHS OUT

- P Get the word out
- P Organize products for give-away or sale (optional)
- P Pricing

1-2 WEEKS OUT

- P Plan your route for farm tours and activities
- P Prepare props for your tour or specific activities
- P Prepare any needed signs
- P Start to prepare your property for visitors
- P Find out who else is hosting in your area
- P Inform your helpers

1 DAY BEFORE

- P Set up
- P Do a run through

THE DAY OF

- P Put your Open Farm Days gate and directional signs out
- P Get feedback from your visitors
- P Enjoy yourself!

PLANNING CALENDAR

4-6 MONTHS OUT

Plan your event:

Planning your Open Farm Days event should be a fun process, but some people might get overwhelmed, not knowing where to begin. Here are some things to think about when planning your event:

- P Is there a specific audience you would like to cater to? (ex- families, special interests like tractors/machinery)
- P Would you like your event to have a theme?
- P Are there other farms or community organizations in your area that you could partner with?
- P Would you like to add a culinary component featuring locally grown food and products? (if so, please ensure Alberta Health Services/AGLC regulations are followed for preparing and serving food and drinks)
- P Engaging the 5 senses can result in a much more meaningful and memorable experience for your visitors. Find safe ways for people to touch, see, smell, listen to, or taste various aspects of their experience.
- P What types of activities would you like to offer? Some potential activities could include:
 - Guided or self-guided tours
 - Demonstrations
 - Crop or plant identification
 - Workshops (ex- seed saving, planting, cheese making, etc.)
 - Games (ex- potato sack races, seek and find)
 - Other activities such as mini-scarecrow making or hay bale art

For more information and tips on planning your event check out the following videos featuring past Open Farm Days hosts:

[Country Thyme Farm](#)

[The Jungle Farm](#)

[Banack's Homestead](#)

Find helpers:

Hosting Open Farm Days by yourself may seem daunting. If possible, find some people who are willing to help you out when it comes time for the big event. Make sure you have enough people to help carry out the activities you have planned so that everything can run smoothly. Here is a list of people who may be willing to help:

- P Family
- P Friends and neighbours
- P Club/Association members
- P Staff

PLANNING CALENDAR

3 MONTHS OUT

Order your complementary resources:	Every Open Farm Days host receives a participant package, containing resources to help you facilitate your event. Be sure to send in your completed resource form to let us know what you would like to receive in your package. This form also lists other free resources available to you through friends of Open Farm Days.
Book porta-potties:	If you do not have washrooms available for public use, please consider renting a porta-potty. Assistance may be available if you do not have public washrooms on site. For more information please contact info@albertaopenfarmdays.ca
Organize refreshments (optional):	<p>Some host like to offer samples, snacks, or beverages during their event. Offering refreshments, whether for sale or complimentary, can be a great way to enhance your visitor experience as well as showcase local Alberta food and products.</p> <p><i>*Remember, if you chose to offer any food or beverages please ensure that you are in compliance with</i></p>
Check that your event is online at:	<p>www.albertaopenfarmdays.ca/ofd-farms</p> <p>Please check that all of the information you listed for your farm when setting up your host farm profile on the website is accurate. In the event that plans change and you have to modify your activities or information, please login to update your host farm profile as soon as possible so that the website can reflect the most accurate information for your guests.</p>

PLANNING CALENDAR

1-2 MONTHS OUT

Get the word out:

If you haven't already, you should be thinking about how to let people know about your event. The Open Farm Days committee does its best to let the public know about the event; but it can be difficult to highlight every participating farm or culinary event. While we take charge of marketing Open Farm Days as a whole, we encourage you to let people know as much as possible about your individual event. Here are some ways you can market your event:

- P Distribute posters and handouts available in your participant packages. Hang the posters throughout your local community. Distribute handouts with any sales you make at farmers markets, or put them out around your local shops (if permissible)
- P Post and tweet on social media
- P Send an evite through your customer mailing list
- P Publicize your event through local papers, newsletters and community event listings

Need assistance with marketing your business? Travel Alberta has a variety of resources available including:

- P Courses on tourism and marketing
<https://industry.travelalberta.com/resources/learning-opportunities>
- P ATIS, an online marketing platform for Alberta tourism operators
<http://industry.travelalberta.com/programs/ATIS>

Organize products for give-away or sale (optional):

Friends and partners of Open Farm Days may have free resources and materials that you can give to your visitors when they come to your farm (ex- informational pamphlets, stickers, books, etc.). For a list of these goods and how to get them please see your resource form.

Open Farm Days is a great opportunity to let the public know what Alberta has to offer. If you regularly have farm-direct sales consider having your products available for purchase. If not, perhaps you can partner with a neighbouring farm or local business who would like to make their products available at your event.

PLANNING CALENDAR

1-2 MONTHS OUT

Pricing:

Open Farm Days is advertised as an event where admission to farms is free. We kindly ask that you adhere to this policy, and ensure that there is at least one free component for the public to enjoy at your event (i.e. a guided or self-guided tour); however, hosts are able to sell products on their farm, and in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to charge fees for certain activities such as culinary experiences or workshops, where cost to the host may be a factor.

Here are some things to consider if there will be a price or fee for a product or activity:

- P What is the regular retail price for this product or similar products?
- P Who is your audience? What would they be willing to pay?
- P What costs are you incurring to produce an activity or experience?
- P How much time or labour does the activity require?
- P How unique is this product or opportunity?

PLANNING CALENDAR

1-2 WEEKS OUT

Plan your route for farm tours and activities:

Start to think about what route you would like guests to take on your tour and what it will look like.

- P Will there be a designated starting point?
- P For guided tours, will you be stopping at certain points to explain? Where?
- P Where will the tour end?
- P Should there be a specific order in which things are done or viewed?

**Note: for self-guided tours, consider putting up story boards at specific locations that can explain or illustrate what things are, how they work, or interesting facts about them.*

Prepare props for your tour or specific activities:

Props are a great way to help explain a process or show visitors what things look like. If you will be using any props in your tour or activities, start to gather them and get them ready. If you are using any tractors, farm equipment, or machinery as props, please make sure that they are safe and clean to show.

Prepare any needed signs:

There may be areas of your property that you would like to keep off limits to the public, certain things that you may want to identify, or things that need instruction. For these circumstances it may be helpful to put up a sign to make it clear for your visitors. Simply printing a sign from your computer and displaying it in the appropriate place can do the trick. Common signs may read:

- P Please do not enter
- P Please do not touch
- P This way/directional arrows
- P Washrooms
- P Wash hands here

Start to prepare your property for visitors:

Make things easy on yourself by making sure you have plenty of time to prepare your property for visitors. It is important to give guests a good impression by ensuring your property is clean and safe. Remember, for many visitors this may be their first visit to a farm and they may not be familiar with what things are or what can be dangerous. Reducing hazards wherever possible will help ensure everyone has a safe and fun visit.

PLANNING CALENDAR

1-2 WEEKS OUT

Find out who else is hosting in your area:

Get to know what other hosts are located near you by visiting <https://albertaopenfarmdays.ca/open-farm-day-planner-maps/>

Here you will find a map of all of the participating host farms. If possible, get in touch with each other so you can cross-promote and gain maximum exposure to potential visitors. This will also help prepare you if visitors ask what other locations are open for around you for Open Farm Days.

Inform your helpers:

Once you have all the details sorted about what your event will look like, where your tour will go, and what activities will be going on, go over your plans with everyone who will be helping out. If possible, set up a meeting with all of your helpers to explain to them exactly what will be taking place on your farm for Open Farm Days. Some things you may want to cover include a run through of your event and any activities that will be taking place, emergency procedures, and who will be doing what. Remember to keep them in the loop if you make any changes to your plans. Informing your helper ahead of time will help make sure your event runs smoothly the day of.

PLANNING CALENDAR

1 DAY BEFORE

- Set up:**
- Setting everything up the day of the event can cause a lot of stress. Set up as much as possible the day before to avoid the time crunch and the stress of doing it last minute.
- Do a run through:**
- Once you have everything set up do a run through of your tour and any activities exactly as you will be doing them the day of. If you planned scheduled tours or timed activities make sure you time how long it takes to complete them. Doing a run through will allow you to catch any unforeseen issues and enable you to adjust if necessary.

THE DAY OF

- Put your Open Farm Days gate and directional signs out:**
- Every Open Farm Days host will receive 1 gate sign and 2 directional signs to guide visitors to your property. Don't forget to put the directional signs out on the main driving routes leading to your property, and the gate sign out at the entrance to your property.
- Get feedback from your visitors:**
- While guests are visiting, please remember to get feedback about their experience. This can be done informally through conversation, and formally through visitor surveys that we provide.

Getting feedback may not seem like a big deal but it is very important for us to know how we can improve the event, and it may be beneficial for you as well if you take part in future Open Farm Days or are thinking about applying some of the activities to your regular business.
- Enjoy yourself!**
- It may seem that the main focus is for visitors to enjoy themselves while learning about our local agriculture, but we want you to enjoy yourself too! We want Open Farm Days to be a good experience for both visitors and hosts so don't forget to have fun!