

Best Management Practices for Agritourism Farms during the COVID-19 Pandemic



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Agritourism is a critical activity and marketing approach for many of our farms, particularly in the fall. It provides customers with a unique outdoor opportunity for farm-based entertainment and food system education, as well the opportunity to purchase fresh produce grown close to home. This document provides management and communication strategies for agritourism activities for the 2020 season to support farms as they navigate the COVID-19 outbreak.

These actions will help protect you and your team as well as reassure customers that you are taking steps to protect them. Experience has shown that customers who feel safe will purchase more of your products and return in the future.

Facts about the SARS-CoV-2 Virus that Causes COVID-19

- The virus is predominantly transmitted person to person through respiratory droplets, which is why 6-foot physical distancing and wearing cloth face coverings are so important.
- Cloth face coverings reduce spread of the virus by those who may be infected even if they are not showing symptoms. These must be worn in addition to physical distancing.
- The virus can persist on surfaces which is why sanitation of commonly touched surfaces and frequent handwashing are important.
- Risks of infection from touching surfaces can be significantly reduced by frequent handwashing, use of hand sanitizers, and by not touching one's face.
- The virus is not transmitted by consuming food.

As an agritourism farm manager, you will need to adjust your business practices to reduce risks and protect your team and customers against virus transmission until state health authorities have determined that the pandemic has subsided.

If you are unable to implement these COVID-19 recommendations, you may decide not to open your agritourism events this year.

If key team members are in a high-risk category for contracting COVID-19 and their presence is required on the farm, then it may be prudent to consider alternatives for this season.

Best Management Practices

<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/farm-resilience/best-management-practices-for-agritourism-covid/>

- Are NOT official NYS Dept of Ag and Market Guidance
- Were drawn up by a team across the Cornell system
- Are meant to help farmers consider options as well as safe operation strategies
- One thing is clear: this season will be different than any previous season



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Commissioner

Official NYS Guidance

- NYSDAM COVID-19 Agritourism FAQ's:
<https://on.ny.gov/3hWkWVj> - September 2, 2020
- NY Forward Business Safety Plan Support for Farms:
<https://bit.ly/2EW6M8n>
- NYSDAM Interim Guidance for the Operation of Farmers' Markets:
<https://on.ny.gov/2Z5o7CJ> - August 3, 2020
- Phase 3/4 Guidelines for Licensed On-Premises Establishments:
<https://on.ny.gov/31Wbyvj>
- NY Forward Low Risk Outdoor Arts and Entertainment Guidelines:
<https://on.ny.gov/3INiDpZ> - June 23, 2020



Cornell Best Management Practice Resources

- Best Management Practices for U-Pick Farms During the COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://bit.ly/3jGQmzB> – May 5, 2020
- Best Management Practices for Craft Beverage Tastings During the COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://bit.ly/352nOMT> – May 20, 2020
- Best Management Practices for Agritourism Farms During the COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/farm-resilience/best-management-practices-for-u-pick-farms-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/> - September 3, 2020

Alternatives to Opening Fully

- Consider a drive through farm tour 'safari'
- Increase direct sales of products through farm stands or curbside pickup.
- Develop online sales. For ideas on getting started, visit: <https://bit.ly/2wZGxtX>
- Build an online 'virtual' tour of your farm
- Provide only U-Pick activities. For management practices, visit: <https://bit.ly/3aOcNhk>



All Agritourism farms must:

- For outdoor spaces, require that all visitors and employees **maintain 6-foot physical distance** and **wear a face covering** if physical distancing (6 ft) cannot be maintained, except when seated and eating.
- **Maintain visitor presence at 33% or less of maximum capacity.**
- Complete a **reopening plan**, even if the business has been open throughout NY PAUSE. This plan must include compliance with applicable guidance for food and non-food businesses and be available at their place of business.



Communication is Key

- Inform customers of COVID-19 farm practices
 - Physical distancing requirements
 - Masks always required indoors and outdoors when 6' distance cannot be maintained
 - Don't visit farm if you are experiencing symptoms, have been near anyone with COVID-19 or are observing travel quarantine (list states)
 - Use handwashing and sanitizing stations frequently
 - Follow new traffic flow and avoid congregating
 - Inform customers of attractions that have capacity limits or those that are unavailable
 - Families or groups must stay close together.
 - Pets are not allowed on the farm.
 - **Eating produce and discarding partially eaten food is NOT allowed.**
 - All customers are required to verbally confirm that they understand and will cooperate with requirements before they may enter the farm.
 - **Help customers understand the farm capacity rules**
 - **Use clear and easy to follow signage**

Protect yourself from COVID-19 and stop the spread of germs.

Simple steps help stop the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses:



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating.



Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Stay home when you are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay up to date by visiting www.ny.gov/coronavirus

Physical distancing in field, store and near attractions

- Consider instructions in field to help customers maintain 6' distance
- Family groups need to stay together
- Avoid moving people on wagons if possible
- Have bathrooms and handwashing readily available



Estimating COVID-19 Capacity

Method 1: To estimate the total number of individuals, divide the total outdoor area customers may access by 100 square feet, to allow for physical distancing.

Method 2: To estimate the total number groups, divide the total outdoor area customers may access by 250 square feet, which estimates groups of 4 people allowing for physical distancing.

Method 3: Once your parking area is 1/3 full, you are at capacity.

Method 4: Assess your own space allowing for customers to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other individuals and groups. This can be done for a combination of indoor and outdoor spaces as long as distancing can be maintained in all areas that customers frequent.

Manage numbers of customers by:

- Create an online appointment booking system.
- Consider a higher, all-inclusive rate.
- No pre-booking? Post the COVID-19 farm capacity on websites, social media and outgoing phone messages.
- Post busiest hours and expected wait times.
- Use real time notifications to manage customer expectations and capacity.
- No bus tours of unrelated individuals are allowed (per NY Forward guidance).
- Train dedicated employees to monitor and control traffic flow onto the farm and to limit customer entry when at max capacity.
- When the farm reaches the COVID-19 capacity, instruct customers to return at a different time when you expect there to be available space.



Consider Point of Sale:

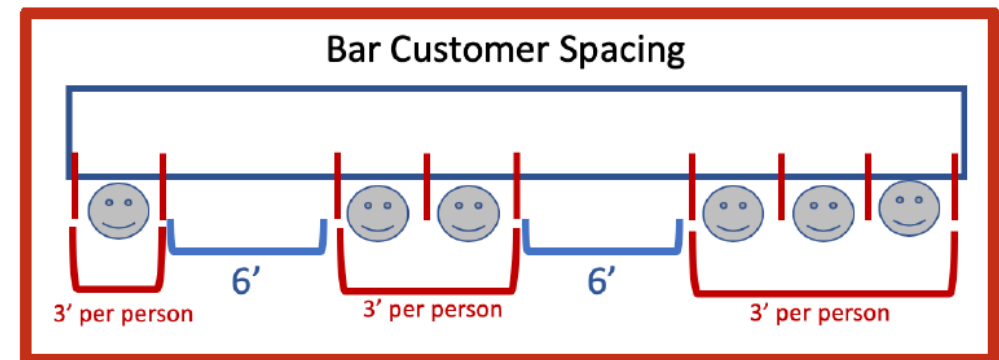


Reduce congregation at cashier:

- One family member checks out while others exit
- Employees maintain 6-foot distance and use face cloth while interacting with customers
- Consider using plastic shields or dividers between employees and customers.
- Insure that employees have sanitary protocol while processing payments and handling merchandise
- Wash or sanitize hands and scale platform between transactions
- Different exit and entrance
- Provide hand sanitizer at exit.

Rethink Outdoor Entertainment

- Design to limit congregating whenever possible
 - Consider one way traffic around farm
- Food sales allowed – space tables appropriately and follow guidelines for [Outdoor Food Service](#)
 - Picnic tables must not exceed 10 people
 - One way entrance and exit
- Children’s play areas NOT allowed without approval from local control room. <https://forward.ny.gov/members-regional-control-rooms>
- Maintain physical distance at demonstrations and activities
 - Hay rides, corn mazes, haunted houses – all are allowed – with distancing and sanitation
- Convert Petting Zoos to animal viewing attractions
- No ticketed music allowed. ‘Incidental’ music only
- Food or Beverage Tastings must follow the NYS guidance. Consult BMP’S for Craft Beverage.



Protect employees and family members

- Communicate changes in policies and procedures
- Provide employees with PPE and train them in proper use, cleaning and storage
 - Employees that interact with customers **MUST** wear a face covering
- Train employees:
 - Daily Health check (depends on farm)
 - Proper handwashing
 - Sanitation
 - Wear clean clothes
 - Maintain physical distance whenever possible



Provide clean environment

- Increase access to toilets and handwashing facilities for customers and employees
- Develop and follow correct protocol for cleaning and sanitizing
- Clean and Sanitize all items that are touched regularly
 - Porta potties
 - Handwashing stations
 - Credit card machines
 - Merchandise
 - Scales
 - etc



Taking these proactive steps will protect your team and your customers while creating a fun, safe and welcome experience during this pandemic.

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Please visit the Cornell Small Farms Program for most up-to-date versions, including any additions and revisions