



Press Release

For immediate release

LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2021: Size does matter this year!

On Sunday 27th June, the farming industry's annual open day, LEAF Open Farm Sunday (LOFS) will return to celebrate its 15th event since the initiative was launched in 2006. At a time when food and farming has generated greater interest than ever before, LOFS organisers, LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), is calling on farmers to take part and help promote the British food and farming story.

There is no doubt that LEAF Open Farm Sunday will look slightly different this year. The trend is for smaller events, with activities where visitors can manage their own learning, such as self-guided farm walks. Every farmer that takes part will still have full autonomy to decide on the type of event they would like to offer, for how long and for how many people.

There is also a greater emphasis on using a free ticketing system, such as TryBooking or Eventbrite, to record and manage visitor numbers with both systems offering an easy, automated solution. There is also flexibility on when events take place. Central promotion will focus on the 27th but farmers can choose any Sunday in June to open their gates and still benefit from LOFS branding and resources.

LEAF Open Farm Sunday Manager, Annabel Shackleton explained why it is more important than ever to take part,

"LEAF Open Farm Sunday plays a vital role promoting British farming, dispelling myths and helping people to value the food they eat. We are actively encouraging more smaller events this year. A simple farm walk for 30 people is both rewarding and manageable for all involved. We know there may be some nervousness around Covid and we want to ensure both host farmers, and visitors attending, feel safe and confident to go ahead. As theatres, cinemas and dining indoors reopens, remember transmission rates are significantly reduced outdoors. The farming stage – our wonderful countryside - is the perfect venue to safely welcome visitors."

River Croft in Inverness-shire held their first LEAF Open Farm Sunday event in 2017 and in 2018 started using the ticketing service to effectively manage visitor numbers. Michelle Anderson-Carroll explained why it was so useful:

"In 2018, we decided to use the LOFS ticketing system that LEAF offers (using Trybooking) and it really is brilliant! We set up two bookable tours but with a very manageable number of 35 visitors on each and promoted the link on Facebook. Both events were booked up quickly, but we also maintained a waiting list on the system. It really helped with knowing when people were arriving too."

The track to our croft is a mile long with very few places for cars to pass – so before the second tour started, we asked the visitors from the first tour not to leave until the second wave of visitors had arrived.”

Over recent months people have become more engaged than ever with farming, nature, where their food comes from and how their food purchasing decision impacts on climate change

With hundreds of farmers across Britain expected to take part in LOFS this year, the industry initiative continues to build community connections and help raise awareness of all that farmers do to maintain the countryside, enhance the environment and produce our food.

Mrs Shackleton said,

“Our research shows that 87% of visitors on LEAF Open Farm Sunday found the day changed the way they think about farming from the technology required to run a farming business through to how more sustainable, regenerative farming is helping to address the climate crisis through better soil and water management, reducing waste, using renewable energy and enhancing biodiversity.

“It is also a chance to raise public awareness of the Countryside Code and public access. Recently there has been an increase in damage to grass and cereal fields that look bare to the un-informed and therefore deemed acceptable to walk on, but actually are home to our future food. LEAF Open Farm Sunday is an opportunity to explain why keeping to the designated footpath is so important, without causing conflict or negativity.”

All farmers who register their LOFS event at www.farmsunday.org receive a comprehensive handbook and free resources There is a network of regional LOFS ambassadors and the team at LEAF available to discuss plans and offer guidance. Farmers do not need to be members of LEAF to take part, but they do need to register their event.

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For further information, a case study or to arrange an interview please contact Rebecca Dawes or Susannah Pate at Jane Craigie Marketing on: rebecca@janecraigie.com or susannah@janecraigie.com or 07792 467730 . Top tips for managing a farm walk has been included a the end of this release.

Editors’ notes:

- LEAF Open Farm Sunday is managed by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) - the leading organisation delivering and promoting Climate Positive action, thriving, resilient and exemplar agro-ecological farming at an increasingly global level. Working with farmers, the food industry, scientists, environmentalists, teachers, young people and consumers we are looking at new ways to deliver productivity and prosperity among our farmers, enrich the environment and engage young people and society in a valuable and meaningful way. LEAF set up and has managed LEAF Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (LEAF is a registered charity no: 1045781)
- LEAF Open Farm Sunday 2021 will take place on 27th June 2021. Register to host at www.farmsunday.org.

- In addition, LEAF Online Farm Sunday virtual farm tours will take place on Sunday 28th March and 26th September, live on Facebook @LEAFOpenFarmSunday, and across Twitter @OpenFarmSunday and Instagram @OpenFarmSunday
- Sponsors of LEAF Open Farm Sunday include: AHDB, Arla Foods, Asda, BASF, Co-op, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Kellogg's, LEAF Marque, NFU, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

Top tips for organising a simple farm walk for 30 people.

1. Plan a simple farm walk that lasts an hour. If your route is self-guided, prepare a map that visitors can follow and place some small signs at different locations, so they can learn about farming and the countryside. You can download some examples from the LEAF Open Farm Sunday website. If your walk is guided, how about teaming up with some local farmers so you can take it in turns to talk about what you do.
2. Register your event free of charge at www.farmsunday.org and order your free resources. You will receive a host farmer handbook that provides lots of top tips and templates to prepare for your event.
3. Set up a visitor booking system, and set your maximum number of visitors. You could offer multiple walks during the day, such as, one in the morning, one at lunchtime and one in the afternoon.
4. Promote your event on your social media channels, or print a poster for your local area. A template is available and LEAF will share your event on the LOFS website if you give permission – its optional.
5. Invite others to join you on the day. For example, your agronomist, vet, feed merchant or tractor dealership. They could bring props to show visitors, such as animal feed or wheat seed, which provides further interest when telling the farming story.
6. Setup a handwashing area. A cold running water tap with liquid soap and paper towels is all you need and will ensure your visitors remain safe. Please note hand gels do not kill all bacteria on-farm so these are not suitable. You will find some fantastic Shaun the Sheep hand-washing signs available to download.
7. Plan where visitors are going to park, and have a back-up plan for wet weather. i.e. could visitors meet in an open barn and go to different “stations” to find out more about what you do on your farm. If you are an arable farm you could have three stations – below ground (soil, roots, seeds and worms), above ground (crop, leaves and grain) and food on the table (bread from wheat, Maltesers from barley).
8. Complete the risk assessment and Covid risk assessment templates, supplied by LEAF, and let your insurance company know you are taking part.

9. On-the-day check the route is safe for visitors, and plan a meeting point for their arrival. A warm welcome at the start is always well received and allows you to meet all your visitors. If you are offering more than one walk during the day, have a separate finishing point and allow enough time between groups to give people time to head on their way.
10. Enjoy the day!