

# Guidelines for Enjoying a Farm Walk



## PLAN AHEAD AND BE PREPARED

- Refer to farm trail maps when available. Be responsible for your own safety and for others in your care – especially children – so be prepared for natural hazards, changes in weather and other events.
- Wild animals, farm animals and horses can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young – so give them plenty of space.
- Bring water, snacks! Check weather forecasts.
- Dress in layers. Conditions change rapidly so don't be afraid to turn back.
- Let someone know where you are going and when to expect your return, many places are without cell phone signals.

## RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors. Respect the needs of local people and visitors alike – for example, don't block gateways, driveways or other paths with your vehicle.
- Cooperate with people at work in the countryside. For example, keep out of the way when farm animals are being moved and follow directions from the farmer. Traffic on country roads can be dangerous to people and wildlife – slow down and where possible consider carpooling.
- The feeling of solitude is often enhanced when group size is small, contacts are infrequent and behavior is unobtrusive.
- Technology continues to shape the outdoor experience. Personal preferences range from high-tech outdoor travelers, who might want to listen to music and take photos, to an anti-tech perspective that favors a minimal use of gadgets.
- Be sure to thoroughly consider how your experience is affecting the way someone else enjoys the outdoors. Remember your actions can affect farmers' livelihoods.
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths.



## **LEAVE DOGS AT HOME OR KEEP UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL AT ALL TIMES**

- Keep your dog on a leash at all times and ensure it does not stray off the path.
- Ensure it does not disturb wildlife, farm animals, horses or other people by keeping it under control.
- If cattle or horses chase you and your dog, it is safer to let your dog off the leash – don't risk getting hurt by trying to protect it. Your dog will be much safer if you let it run away from a farm animal in these circumstances and so will you.
- Dog poop can cause infections and contaminate fruit/vegetable operations so always clean up after your dog with poop bags and dispose of it properly when you get home. Make sure your dog is wormed regularly to protect it, other animals, and people.

## **PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home. Take special care not to damage, destroy or remove features such as rocks, plants and trees.
- This includes not carving your initials into a tree or picking flowers. They provide homes and food for wildlife, and add to everybody's enjoyment of the countryside.
- Pack out what you pack in - litter and leftover food (this includes compostable scraps like orange peels and pistachio shells) can be dangerous to wildlife and farm animals.
- Please, no smoking, no fires and no camping (without farmer's permission).
- Stay on trails, don't create shortcuts.
- Understand expected interaction with farm animals and wildlife. Do not disturb farm animals, wildlife or plants just for a "better look." Observe animals from a distance so they are not scared or forced to flee. Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to animals. Travel quietly and do not pursue or feed. Sick or wounded animals can bite, peck or scratch and send you to the hospital. Young animals removed or touched by well-meaning people may cause the animal's parents to abandon them. If you find sick animals or animals in trouble you should notify the farmer.



## LEAVE GATES AND PROPERTY AS YOU FIND THEM AND FOLLOW PATHS

- A farmer will normally close gates to keep farm animals in, but may sometimes leave them open so the animals can reach food and water.
- Leave gates as you find them or follow instructions on signs.
- When in a group, make sure the last person knows how to leave the gates. Leave machinery and farm animals alone – don't interfere with animals even if you think they're in distress. Try to alert the farmer instead.
- Use gates where you can – climbing over walls and fences can damage them and increase the risk of farm animals escaping.
- Our heritage matters to all of us – be careful not to disturb historic sites. Leave cultural artifacts and natural objects alone.



The Farm Walk Trail network is a collaborative initiative of food, farming and agritourism organizations to create a searchable list of farm walking trails statewide. Farm-Based Education Network. NOFA-VT, Shelburne Farms, UVM Extension, Vermont Fresh Network / DigInVT, Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing.

For more information, visit [DigInVT.com/farmwalks](http://DigInVT.com/farmwalks)