

FALL FARM ACTIVITY GUIDELINES & COVID-19

Each fall, many farms host a variety of season-specific activities including corn mazes, wagon rides, and pumpkin patches. These activities are beloved by Arkansans and also generate a large percentage of annual income for farms. The coronavirus has caused some hesitation, yet with preparation farms can remain open while managing risk. Consider these safety tips and suggestions to ensure that your activities are safe for all your guests and staff.

Farms that host the activities highlighted in this resource are considered large indoor or outdoor venues and should follow the Arkansas Department of Health’s Guidances for **Large Indoor Venues** or **Large Outdoor Venues**. These guidances are subject to change as restrictions are lifted or tightened due to COVID-19 infection rates. You should become familiar with them as you prepare for guests at your farm this fall. If you would like to submit an optional COVID-19 safety plan for review by the Arkansas Department of Health, you may e-mail it to adh.ehs@arkansas.gov.

As of April 1, 2021, a state-wide executive order requiring that all persons at both indoor and outdoor venues, including farms, must wear a face covering if a distance of at least six feet cannot be maintained has been lifted, although it is still strongly encouraged to do so. Continued mask wearing is still advised for those who are not yet vaccinated, who have underlying health conditions, or who are at higher risk for severe complications from COVID-19. Please see the **Face Coverings Guidance** for more information. Be sure to check for local requirements that may still be in effect. Finally, small businesses, including farms, may receive some liability protection under **ACT 559** should COVID-19 spread at an event; owners/operators must be in compliance with directives/guidances and acting in good faith.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Will my farm operate and host any fall activities this season? If so, which ones? (See list above for recommendations.)
- Do we have enough staff to operate safely? Can we rearrange working hours to properly staff events and activities?
- Can we restructure to accommodate reservations, timed entries, and wait times?
- What additional resources and materials (e.g., tickets, signage, hand sanitizers, gloves, masks, barriers) will we need to implement safety measures?

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES	UNRECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES
Corn & Hay Mazes	Activity Courses & Playgrounds
Shows, Entertainment, & Other Performances	Games & Shared Equipment Activities
Petting Zoo	Eating Contests (unless socially-distanced)
Pumpkin Patch & U-Pick Activities	Haunted Houses
Wagon & Tractor Rides	



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- Are there local and/or state guidances discouraging a certain activity? Are there new requirements of which we need to be aware? (**Check the ADH's COVID-19 Guidances webpage.**)
- What methods of communication should we use to communicate changes to our events and activities this year? Should we use social media or a website to book reservations?
- What liability measures will we enforce to ensure both guests' safety and our protection? Will we require waivers at ticket purchase or entrance to the farm? What should we include in these liability waivers?

GUESTS SHOULD BE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING:

- **A clean, healthy environment.** Do not admit anyone who has been ill or been in contact with an ill person in the past 14 days. Staff may inquire about this and/or take guests' temperature before entering the farm. Have staff regularly sanitize and disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- **Hand sanitizer.** Provide sanitizer when guests enter and exit the farm and at various locations throughout the farm that are visible and accessible.
- **Signage.** Clearly communicate your farm's temporary COVID-19 and other health policies. Consider posting in multiple languages and using graphics along with text.
- **Restrooms, wash stations, and trash receptacles.** Service them regularly.
- **Face masks/coverings.** While farms are not required to provide masks, consider offering or selling with your farm name or logo or provide a bandana as a festive keepsake for their visit.



CORN & HAY MAZES

Corn, hay, and other mazes are quintessential fall-time fun.

As they are typically outdoors, they may remain in operation.

Safety precautions should be made since some sections of the maze may confine guests or allow for "bunching" or "grouping."

Safety tips and suggestions:



- **Think about the traffic flow** of your maze. Will guests be able to move through the maze in a manner that prevents large groups of people gathering?
- **Use a reservation or booking system**, if not already in place, to manage the number of guests in the maze at any given time.
- **Provide hand sanitizer** at the entrance, exit, and throughout the maze. These stations could be used as "landmarks" to communicate that guests are going the right way.
- **Place staff members throughout the maze** to keep guests moving in the right direction, to prevent back-tracking, and to monitor activity inside the maze. Another option is to assign a staff member to accompany each group of guests and to only monitor safety rather than provide help with maze direction.
- **Place clear signage that details your policies** around the maze entrance, exit, and check-in station.

WAGON & TRACTOR RIDES

Wagon and tractor rides allow guests to view your farm's natural beauty as they relax and enjoy the open air. Due to the proximity to others and spacing issues, social distancing and proper disinfection and sanitization practices should be maintained.



Safety tips and suggestions:

- **Space seating of individuals or groups** at least six feet apart. Depending on the seating arrangement, it may be necessary to mark seating locations with tape or signs to ensure guests sit where they should.
- **Disinfect and sanitize** all handrails, seats, and other commonly touched surfaces before the first ride, between rides, and after the last ride every day. Track cleaning activity with a record log.
- **Consider booking reservations** for guests so the number of guests per ride is managed. Do not allow guests to congregate at the drop-off/pick-up location unless they can maintain a six-foot distance.
- **Designate a staff member to monitor the ride** and to enforce your policies.
- **Place clear signage that details your policies** around the pick-up/drop-off area, check-in station, and seating area.



PETTING ZOOS

Animals are a highlight for many guests to the farm, and petting zoos are an enjoyable opportunity to interact safely with them. As these are typically fixed spaces, some consideration of traffic flow is necessary. As there is evidence that some animals may contract the coronavirus, it is strongly recommended that guests do not put their faces near the animal's face. Feeding and petting may still occur, though viewing only is also encouraged. Hand washing and sanitization should occur before and after the activity.

Safety tips and suggestions:

- **Make a traffic flow plan** for your petting zoo. Decide where guests will enter, exit, and at which areas they will stop and interact with animals. Consider if requiring a time limit at each stop is necessary to keep guests moving.
- **Verbally notify guests of your temporary policies** (e.g., do not put faces near animals, no kissing, viewing only) before they enter the petting zoo space.
- **Provide sanitizer and disposable, prepared bags of animal food** at the petting zoo check-in or entrance. After guests leave the petting zoo area, provide a place to wash or sanitize hands and dispose of remaining food.
- **Station a staff member in the zoo** to monitor guests' interactions with animals.
- **Place clear signage that details your policies** at the petting zoo check-in and entrance.

PUMPKIN PATCH & U-PICK ACTIVITIES

Pumpkin patches and other u-pick activities are the perfect way for guests to experience your farm's bounty and get a little exercise and fresh air. These activities can be safe for all guests with a few safety precautions. Many u-pick operations have remained open and even saw an uptick in activity during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Safety tips and suggestions:

- **Determine if it is feasible to socially distance guests** in the size/acreage of your patch or field. Recommendation: 100 guests/acre which allows for a 21 ft x 21 ft space for each guest or group.
- **Provide hand sanitizer and any equipment needed** (buckets, etc.) when guests check in. These items should be sanitized before they are distributed. Plastic bag liners may be used to reduce cross-contamination.
- **Timed entrances to the patch or field area** may be a good practice. It is not as strict as a reservation, but it does allow for the staff to better manage who is in the space. If the area is large enough and the volume of guests is manageable, this may not be necessary.
- **Have a staff member monitor** the patch or field.
- **Have guests check-out in a designated point-of-sale** once they have finished selecting their pumpkins or other produce. Consider using a clear plastic barrier between guests and staff, using touchless forms of payment, and having guests bag their own items.
- **Place clear signage that details your policies** around the patch or field entrance and point-of-sale.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
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with the Cooperative Extension Service's Local, Regional & Safe Foods team.

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