

WHEN VISITING A FARM

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Throughout New York, sporadic reports are received regarding suspicious visitors on farms. Such "visitors" may include animal right activists, agribusiness representatives, environmentalists, farmers, next-door neighbors, hikers, hunters, veterinarians, or other special interest groups such as political candidates. With today's concerns about criminal activity occurring on farms, there is good reason for a farmer, family member, employee, or neighbor to be concerned about an unannounced and/or unknown visitor or caller. Following are some guidelines for both visitors and farmers when meeting, whether or not they know each other.

- Call ahead to let the farmer/family know why they would like to visit and when, and leave a call back number so the farmer or family member can return the call. Getting a call back number is a highly recommended way for farmers and agribusiness to verify and identify a caller. Better yet, having an unknown caller fax a letter to the farm regarding the purpose and time of their visit/call is an effective method. Ideally, an unknown caller/visitor will provide a reference name and a phone number to help identify and validate the purpose of the call/visit.
- Visitors should be aware of where to enter a farm and where to park, and provide a brief description of the vehicle that they will be using. While at a farm it's always a good idea for a visitor to identify themselves with the use of a driver's license or other formal identification and have a business card that has points of contact.
- Biosecurity measures and other considerations, such as guard animals should be reviewed and discussed at the very beginning of a meeting.
- If for some reason the farmer or a family member is not home, it's always a good practice for the visitor to leave a business card and/or note with an employee or at the house to indicate that they stopped in.
- Family members and employees should be afforded flexibility and understanding when attempting to interact and identify a caller and/or visitor. Family members and employees should be encouraged to report visitors to the farmer and or immediate supervisor. Historically, employees may see suspicious activities but tend to be reluctant to report them to their employer in fear of retaliation for volunteering unsolicited information.
- If you are still suspicious about a caller and/or visitor, get as much information about the individual as possible and report it immediately to local law enforcement.

These preventive measures can help ensure continued safe and effective farm operations, while accommodating on-site visitors.

Sources: Offices of the Sheriff – Monroe, Livingston and Wyoming Counties; New York State Police – Troop E

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