

Tennessee Agritourism Today

An electronic newsletter dedicated to educating and informing agritourism industry partners



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Contents

TDA Offers Workshops on Web and Social Media 1

New Law Limits Agritourism Liability 1

Spotlight on Agritourism: Ring Farm 2

Create Effective Roadside Signs 3

Upcoming Events 3



TDA Offers Workshops on Web and Social Media

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture is offering workshops called "Using Your Website and Social Media to Your Marketing Advantage."

These workshops are for farmers who want to learn how to use the Web to market their products or on-farm attractions.

Feature speaker, Sarah Klepper Mount, from SG Creations, which is based in Tallahassee, FL, will talk about secrets to get your Web site noticed and how to make your site user-friendly. There will be a session on Social Media and how to incorporate this technology into your marketing plan. Guest speakers from the

Tennessee Department of Agriculture and Department of Tourist Development will update participants on their programs and how to get your farm on their Web sites for free.

Workshops will be held:

August 12 at the West Tennessee Research & Education Center (605 Airways Boulevard, Jackson, TN)

August 13 at the Ed Jones Auditorium, Ellington Agricultural Center, 440 Hogan Rd., Nashville, TN

August 14 at the Great Smoky Mountain Expo Center, 1615 Pavilion Drive, White Pine, TN

The workshops will begin at

9:00am and end at 3:00pm. The workshops are free and lunch will be provided.

These workshops will satisfy the workshop attendance requirement for the Agritourism Master Producer (50%) cost-share level of funding for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Producer Diversification Cost-Share.

Call the Tennessee Department of Agriculture at (615) 837-5321 to pre-register.

Contact Pamela Bartholomew with questions at (615) 837-5348.

New Law Limits Agritourism Liability in Tennessee

A new law on the books as of July limits the liability of agritourism operators.

Similar to a law already in existence for equine activities and agritourism laws in several other states, the law requires agritourism operators to post signs informing guests of the inherent risks of agritourism.

To be eligible for liability protection under the new law, the agritourism operation must be eligible for greenbelt classification. The law limits liability to

agritourism operators if a guest is injured unless willful or wanton misbehavior is proven. Misbehaviors may include reckless disregard for the safety of participants, intentionally hurts a participant, having knowledge of dangerous conditions and not making the danger known, and failing to properly train employees.

Even with this new law, operators may still be sued. Operators should

discuss risk management tools such as liability insurance with their attorney and insurance agent.

The text of the law is available on-line at <http://cpa.utk.edu/pdffiles/cpa168.pdf>.

The Tennessee Agritourism Association is working to make signs available for a minimal cost. Contact Vera Ann Myers for more information (veraannm@comcast.net).



Spotlight on Agritourism: Ring Farm

Johnny & Thelma Ring Ring Farm

Maury County
www.ringfarm.com

Johnny and Thelma Ring are preparing for their fifth year of agritourism at Ring Farm in Maury County. Started with a desire to add income to the farm and Johnny's love of kids (he's just a big kid himself, according to Thelma), Ring Farm strives to provide family fun with something for all ages.

The main focus of Ring Farm is in the fall with school tours and weekend family/group activities. The Rings offer a variety of attractions including a cotton maze for young children, 1.5 mile wagon ride through the Halloween-themed woods, two 40 foot slides, corn cannon, a playground and a picnic shelter. A pavilion serves as a learning center complete with "milk cows" for school tour lessons. The retail center holds a variety of fall décor items including straw, mums, pumpkins, gourds, cornstalks and Indian corn.

The Rings also have an educational corn maze highlighting history and geography of a different county each year. This year the maze will

feature 31 points of interest about Rutherford County.

Another popular attraction at Ring Farm is fire pits. Available for rental by reservation, the Rings build the fire and provide extra wood, benches, roasting sticks, tables, etc. People can bring their own food for a hot dog roast or s-mores. The Rings are receiving reservations for fire pits for this fall already. One pit costs \$50 and will work for up to 40 people.

Two new ventures this year include on-farm weddings and summer day camps. The Rings have two wedding scheduled to be held on the farm this fall. They also held their first week of day camps this summer. Fourteen campers, all of whom said they were coming back next year and bringing their friends, enjoyed arts and crafts, planting a garden, an archeological dig and playing in the creek.

Thelma attributes their success to, "hard work, trying to make everything as safe as possible, and listening to customer comments and trying to add things people want." Their biggest challenge is

getting information out to people to let them know about the operation.

The Rings market their operation using a wide variety of methods including a Web site and listings on the Tennessee Agritourism Association, Pick Tennessee Products and Department of Tourist Development Web sites. In addition, the Rings purchase advertising in newspapers and magazines and on the radio. Their award winning brochure is placed in area businesses and mailed to residences and school teachers. Their new Tourist Oriented Directional Signs with the Pick Tennessee Products barn logo has also garnered a lot of attention.

As for advice to farmers interested in agritourism, Thelma says, "It takes a lot of time and a lot of money to get started, but it has been worth it in the long run. You have to be prepared to start out slow and build the business over time."



Create Effective Roadside Signs

Roadside signs are important in helping customers find agritourism operations and also help promote the business. Motorists will typically be passing signs at 30 mph or more and may be unable to read or react to poorly designed signs. Maximize the effectiveness of signage by following a few tips.

- Consult local and state regulations concerning signage before producing and displaying signs.
- The sign should at least contain the business name and an indication of location such as a directional arrow with a mileage estimate or some instruction such as "Next Right."
- Use contrasting colors for the background and lettering to make the

sign more visible, a white background with black lettering or a yellow background with blue lettering.

- Choose letter height and widths to allow for legibility at the typical speed of traffic at the sign location. The table below shows recommended letter height and width for various distances to the sign. It also contains the number of words that can be read at various speeds.

Example Distances and Words Read at Various Speeds with Recommended Letter Heights and Widths						
Distance (feet)	Letter Width (inches)	Letter Height (inches)	Number of Words at Speed			
			30 (mph)	40 (mph)	50 (mph)	60 (mph)
50	3/8	1 3/4	4	2	1	0
100	3/4	3 1/2	8	5	4	3
200	1 3/8	7	15	11	8	6
300	2 3/16	11	22	16	13	10
400	2 7/8	14	30	22	17	14
500	3 1/2	17 1/2	38	28	22	18

- Place signs so that customers can safely read and react to them. The table below shows the distance drivers need to slow down and make a safe turn. At 40 mph, for example, a driver needs 1/4 of a mile to slow down to make a safe turn. Signs should be at least 1/4 mile from a turn.

Examples of Distances Drivers Need to Slow Down and Make Safe Turns or Pull-offs	
Speed	Distance Needed
at 30 mph	2/10 of a mile
at 40 mph	1/4 of a mile
at 50 mph	3/10 of a mile

Upcoming Events

Using Your Website and Social Media to Your Marketing Advantage Workshops

August 12 – Jackson
 August 13 – Nashville
 August 14 – White Pine

See article on page 1 or contact Pamela Bartholomew for further information at (615) 837-5348.

Tennessee Agritourism Association Meeting

September 1, Location TBA

Contact Vera Ann Myers at VeraAnnM@comcast.net

Farmland Legacy Workshops (Estate Planning)

www.farmlandlegacy.org

Oct. 27, 29 & Nov. 7
 Jackson, Knoxville, & Murfreesboro

Tennessee Agritourism Conference to be held as part of the Tennessee Horticultural Expo

Save the Date
 January 28-30, 2010
 Nashville Airport Marriott

