

1 - MARKETING YOUR PRODUCTS THRU EVENTS

by Ellie Winslow (2007 AEA convention speaker)

One of the most effective ways to attract new customers is by have interesting events at your farm. They might be just one day or could stretch to a whole weekend. This is the first category in the marketing plan I recommend in my books—**internal events**. You ought to be doing some well-designed and well-planned internal events at your farm! Here are some ideas to help you make it a success. Remember, you only have one—or two--days for getting people to your farm, and turning them into customers. Here are some suggestions for making it a miraculous marketing event.

There are entire business sectors devoted to event planning. But if you've ever planned a big birthday party, a wedding, a seminar, a craft show, farmer's market or a corporate getaway, you already have experience that will get you through this one, too! Now let's talk about some things that will make it really successful

Start with basics--farm and animal prep and planning what's on tap

It goes without saying that you've spiffed up the farm and all the animals, right? Pretty straightforward. But here are some more ideas that might help.

- Be sure you plan how people will arrive, park, circulate and leave—all to minimize traffic jams.
- Will you need signs directing people? How does your farm sign look?
- Will you need a porta-potty for guests? Will you need extra furniture, like tables, umbrellas, tents or display shelves?
- What will you have on hand that weekend that they can buy and how will you display it? There's a science to retail display and it can make a huge difference in how things sell. See my Book "Economy Proofing Rural Business" for an entire section on the art of retail.
- What informational displays will you have for people? Things that might be interesting for visitors and prospective customers alike-- what goats (or sheep, alpacas, dogs, chickens) eat, how you care for them, showing, birthing, and all about milk, fiber or meat or whatever products and services your type of animals provide.
- What activities will you have going on? Who will manage those activities? In order to make this a miraculous marketing opportunity it's important to make it fun and memorable—even outrageous!

If you're not memorable, you're invisible.

- Think about games, contests, hands-on demos, a maze with livestock theme, Polaroid pictures...use your imagination to create an event they can't stop talking about.
- Don't neglect the peripheral things that go on at your farm like gardens and orchards. They may have great entertainment value, too. (cider pressing, pumpkin carving, jelly making, drying veggies, canning demo, spinning and weaving, soap making...the list is endless.
- Will you serve refreshments? Will you have food they can feed the animals? Will you charge for any of the above?

Next time I'll talk about promoting this event at your farm!

(Ellie Winslow is retired now. She taught marketing seminars all across the US and is the author of "Marketing Farm Products," "Growing Your Rural Business," and "Economy Proofing Rural Business,")

NOTE: Unless you are a working agricultural emu farm, you may need to get a license for people to view your livestock. Visit the USDA/APHIS website for more information, www.aphis.usda.gov/awa/bird-standards .
