



Network News

Spring 2021 Issue No81

New Updated Industry Code of Practice



Inside this issue:

- **Member's Round-Up**
- **NFAN Open Day at Cotswold Farm Park**
- **Improving Revenues from Catering... and More!**



National
Farm
Attractions
Network



Future NFAN Events

Face-to-Face Networking Returns

Cotswold Farm Park 21 September 2021

After 16 months of no NFAN face-to-face events, we are very excited to announce an Open Day at Cotswold Farm Park on 21 September.

You'll join a tour of Cotswold Farm Park and their new campsite and learn about Cotswold's innovative events as well as having plenty of opportunities to meet fellow operators. In addition, we are running a Mini Trade Exhibition; a great opportunity for Members to reconnect with industry suppliers and find out what is new.

For those wanting to stay the night before, a relaxed networking dinner will be arranged at Cotswold Farm Park.



Maximising Profits from Catering

Online Webinar

June 2021

COVID-19 has changed how we operate catering. Find out how to maximise profits from catering, what systems you can put in place to streamline profits and how you can prepare for the future. In this workshop, we shall also touch on Natasha's Law regarding food labelling legislation.



New Marketing Techniques on Social and Digital

Online Workshop

June 2021

Everyone is now spending more time online. In this workshop led by Agility Marketing, find out the key consumer trends and hear how operators have achieved digital success using video, Facebook Stars and online advertising. With everyone booking online, also discover how to make the most of email in 2022.



Industry Code of Practice Online Workshop

15 September 2021

With the new update on the Industry Code of Practice, get up to speed at our workshop. Run by Health and Safety Practitioner Ray Hipkin and Sally Jackson (owner of The Pink Pig), learn what you need to do to keep visitors safe on your farm.

COMING SOON

January Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition

We are currently finalising dates for the January 2022 Conference and look forward to announcing this in the near future.

With the COVID vaccine rollout and the easing of lockdown, we can finally return to some sort of normality within the industry and hopefully a busy summer ahead!

The New Normal



I am glad to say the market research indicators reinforce my positivity about the summer. Mintel predict a 22% increase on staycations compared to 2019 and Tourist Board research highlights consumers are choosing days out in coastal and countryside destinations rather than cities.

Farm attractions are natural innovators and I've been continually impressed to discover how we've all evolved our businesses over the last year. Some changes made due to COVID will make our businesses stronger. At National Forest for example, we will no longer open 12 months of the year, whilst others have diversified into camping or seen technological advancements with online catering apps.

I am glad that some initiatives at NFAN will also start returning as restrictions lift. We are bringing back the NFAN awards and I am also very excited to announce the return of our first face to face NFAN networking event at Cotswold Farm Park. Combining an Open Day with a Mini Trade Exhibition, it is going to be an amazing event. It is also fitting that our first event out of lockdown takes us to the very first open farm to ever have opened in the UK, 50 years ago.

As I sign off, I need to update everyone on NFAN's initiative to reduce rates for the sector. Proving more of a marathon than a sprint, work is going on behind the scenes. Financial analyst, Mark Wasilewski can still help NFAN members free of charge, either by helping them access the VOA portal or calculating what your rate should be by replicating an R&E calculation. Mark's contact details are:

E: markwas@zoho.com

T: 01234 771 599 M: 07872 592 941

Tom Robinson
Chairman

And welcome to our new members

Farm Parks

Ridgeway Farm
Kew Little Pigs
Foggy's Farm
Woolley Animals Ltd
The Donkey Sanctuary
Active Kids Adventure Park
Alpaca Walking at Spring
Farm Alpacas

Trade Members

Farrah's of Harrogate Ltd
Ropework-UK
Premier Log Homes Ltd
Playcraft Ltd
Severn Leisure Rides Ltd
Aqualand Industries Ltd
Inspired Energy plc
Real Dinos
TouchWood Play

Contents

- 2** Future NFAN Events
- 3** Chairman's Welcome
- 4** Member's Round Up
- 5** Catering in a COVID World
- 6** Events with a Twist
- 7** Updated Industry Code of Practice
- 8** NFAN Awards Return



Member's Round Up

Across the UK, farm parks have been winning awards, left, right and centre. Fantastic news and a huge congratulations to all!



Farm Parks Excel in Tourism Awards

In the 'Large Visitor Attraction' category in The Beautiful South Awards for Excellence, NFAN members scooped both first and second place. A big well done to Fishers Adventure Farm who won Gold, closely followed by Wellington Country Park who picked up the Silver Award.

Whilst down in Devon, The Big Sheep's inspiring socially distanced seating bubbles won Silver in the 'Tourism Innovation' Category of the Devon Tourism Awards and in York, York Maze won the Gold 'Tourism Event of the Year' Award for Hallowstream at the White Rose Awards.

With so many members winning awards we want to start 'A Farm Park Hall of Fame' on the NFAN website. Do please continue to share your successes with us.

Camping Bolsters Income

As people swap sun and sea holidays for staycations, more farm parks are embracing camping for the first time.

Wroxham Barns have launched a two-night family camping package, including a packed activity programme and unlimited access to the farm park. Whilst at Mead Open Farm you can 'Enjoy a night of nature' with special out of hours play, alongside pizza and pasta nights.

Camping at Cotswold Farm Park, however, has now reached their 15th year. Taking luxury camping to a brand-new level, their accommodation includes 66 pitches, varying from Pods to Motorhomes. New this year is the 8-bed Sunflower Safari Tent, with a kitchen, bathroom and even a hot tub!



The new Sunflower Safari Tent at Cotswold Farm Park.

Outdoor Adventure!



Windmill Farm Park.

With outdoors being the first areas to open following lockdown three, it is great to hear Members have been investing in outdoor play.

A considerable outdoor investment has been made at Windmill Farm Park, with an uplift in results seen after a single social media post. Taking them from 30% to 100% sold out for the first 10 days, it's safe to say they are very pleased. The new attractions include two new Jumping Pillows, a new Sand Pit with Diggers, new animal areas and a new Tractor Ride.



Sacrewell Farm Park.

Sacrewell Farm have also been heavily investing and ensuring their play combines with education. The play water wheel represents the farm's own heritage working water mill, whilst the large climbing tractor in the sand pit represent their machinery on site. They have also made sure the new attractions incorporate activities for children with disabilities, with a focus on sound and feel.

Monty's Farm Park is now open

After years researching and planning, Ardardan have now opened their farm park in West Scotland, called Monty's Farm Park.

Initially planned as an indoor unique playbarn and café, Director Sue Montgomery shared that they took the plunge and decided to open the outdoor space at launch. We wish them the best of luck and cannot wait to see what the future beholds.



Monty's Farm Park.

Catering in a COVID World

COVID has meant big changes to the way catering functions, so we put our questions to catering expert 'Acacia' (one of our trade members), as well as Mead Open Farm and Farmer Copleys (both previous winners of NFAN's Food and Beverage award).

1 How has the catering spend per head been impacted since COVID?

Acacia: Initially, after the easing of restrictions, spend tends to be higher but this does settle down once the novelty of going out wears off. Going into the summer we think customers want fair value, therefore we don't recommend hiking prices up too high to recover losses as this will impact businesses revenue over the medium term.

Farmer Copleys: It's been varied during each phase of lockdown. The single household phase reduced spend dramatically, whereas 'Eat Out to Help Out' encouraged customers to choose the most expensive options. Moving forward, we're expecting high footfall and pre-COVID spend in the café as we think people will appreciate going out more.

2 What tips do you have for getting the most from the team?

Acacia: Set your team up for success: define how you want every customer to be served and treated through a "way of working document" for Food and Beverage. Brief these into the team and make sure they regularly check them.

Mead Open Farm: We are big on staff training and this includes training staff to upsell in the current environment. With the pre-ordering style of service, it has meant customers haven't been able to buy with their eyes.

Farmer Copleys: We think it's so important to keep your team motivated. We sat each individual team member down, asked them how they were and gave everyone in the business a big comfy Farmer Copleys hoodie as a 'hug'. This alongside regular zoom meetings is important to keep your staff in the loop, ensuring they feel an essential part of the business.

3 Have range of food options changed?

Acacia: Most of our clients have reduced the number of products they sell by an average of 25% in the last year. This new world is a chance to reset the clock,



Baker at Farmer Copleys.

find the right balance of products based on historic sales mixes and margins that suit your business, and the capabilities of your team.

Mead Open Farm: Pre-COVID, we had spent a lot of time redefining the menu so with COVID we didn't want to adapt it that much. Instead, we looked for some fantastic disposable solutions for takeaway food.

Farmer Copleys: Although the food options haven't changed since the start of lockdown, we will be implementing more healthy options including vegetarian /pulse-based protein dishes as the world is changing from a health and sustainability point of view.

4 What changes will be kept?

Mead Open Farm: When indoor play reopened, we used temporary barriers to split the café and indoor play areas to enable us to set indoor play capacities. This resulted in allowing us to turn over the tables quicker in the café as people left once they had eaten. This worked so well in December we put up a solid wall splitting the areas.

Farmer Copleys: Our best tip is to have an online menu and ordering system - this has revolutionised our business and is integrated into our EPOS. An average of 60% were happy ordering on their phone, allowing us to staff accordingly in all of the areas as well as making it efficient for the chefs receiving orders and customers waiting time.

5 What communications have changed with customers?

Acacia: Customers want to know before they arrive what to expect from you. Doing this well will reduce the amount of people bringing their own food and over time, increase your spend per head. In addition to professional food imagery and lifestyle images on your website, review your internal signage and menu boards in all your food and beverage outlets. Make them as clear and simple as possible. This will speed up customer decision making at point of sale.

Farmer Copleys: We have also adapted our service style by having someone on the door to explain the new system, including how to order and the facemask policy, this eliminates any customer queries.



Events with a Twist

Faced with continuous lockdowns and closures, farm attractions have had to come up with innovative ideas for hosting online events.



TV presenter sprinkles dino magic at Roarr!

Not being able to open for Easter, Roarr! Dinosaur Adventure brought the park to their customers with children's TV presenter David Ribb and their dinosaur mascot Dippy.

The online event was completely free of charge and followed the duo on a park adventure.

The initiative put them at the forefront of their customers minds for reopening and the video is now one of their most viewed videos of the park.

Online Tours for Schools at The Ark Open Farm



The Ark Open Farm have been holding virtual farm visits or pre-recorded personalised videos for schools, nurseries and different groups. During lockdown these have provided a great source of income as well as enabled them to keep in touch with their customers.



Virtual Tours Take Off

Cannon Hall are well known for brilliant live videos and now run monthly virtual tours at £4.99 for farm fans unable to visit in person. The next event focuses on sheep shearing special in May, which includes a check on the lambs and an insightful trip to the Reptile House.

During lockdown a number of other farm parks also trialled virtual tours during Easter, including West Lodge Farm Park and Mead Open Farm.

Little Farmers Club at Longdown Activity Farm

Longdown Activity Farm have introduced 'Little Farmer's Club', an online annual membership from £10 a year, giving access to videos, fun sheets and tractor tales. The feedback has been very positive with just under 200 sign ups, including schools who are using these online resources as a learning aid.



New Updated Industry Code of Practice



The Key Changes

It has been six years since the last update to the Industry Code of Practice. The new update was launched in April 2021 and NFAN again, had an active role on the Access to Farms Group, liaising with HSE.

The Industry Code of Practice covers all interaction between farm animals and the public, albeit at a farm attraction, mobile petting zoo (new in this latest update) or on Alpaca Walking Tours.

For further information, download the full ICOP document free from farmattractions.net

New Look and See Areas

A key change is the new 'Look and See' Areas, which are in addition to the existing 'Animal Contact Areas' and 'Non-Contact Areas' (such as picnic area and play).

'Look and See Areas' are when animals are not intended to be interacted with, but visitors may come into contact with them, for example from animal faeces on fences or if animals approach the fence to be petted. A good example is a farm walk that is away from the central contact area or an interconnecting walkway between two central areas.

The revised Code of Practice identifies measures that should be taken to prevent contamination. Prevention could be simply adding an electric fence or for a higher investment, double fencing or adding hand washing facilities at the end of the walk.

For these areas, robust risk assessments will be required to support your decisions.

More Consideration to Staff Animal Contact Areas

Close monitoring of visitor numbers is required as greater emphasis is being placed on having the adequate level of supervising staff in animal contact areas. For example, a wet Wednesday in November will be different to a busy Easter half term. To support your decisions, you will need to include your rationale in your risk assessments.

More Prominent Hand Washing Facilities & Cleaning Regimes

Hand washing facilities should be signposted and placed on the visitor journey where they can be clearly seen. In addition, hand washing is required for visitors before and after play. This means when visitors leave or enter a play area, hand washing facilities are required.

The ICOP also states a schedule of cleaning is now required for play areas.

More Robust Risk Assessments

Generic risk assessments are no longer satisfactory and need to be adapted to be specific to your site.

In addition, your risk assessments should seek longer term solutions rather than temporary fixes, and you now need to consider all people onsite when you review zoonosis safety, including contractors and tradespeople.

New Guidance for Mobile Attractions

For those farm parks offering outreach programmes, there is a new section with summarised rules for mobile animal attractions.

Further Consideration When Using Animal Paddocks for Public Events

The previous ICOP stated there should be three weeks between animals leaving and any field being used by the public (for camping or events). Three weeks still remains in place, however the ICOP warns that microorganisms can last longer than three weeks in animal faeces. Therefore, you may need to consider poo picking a field before the public use it.

Improved Ways of Communicating the Risks

The ICOP is keen to see other ways of highlighting the risk of infection to visitors beyond written communications, including the consideration of verbal, visual or video.

HOW IS NFAN HELPING?

Industry Code of Practice Webinar

Members can book onto our Industry Code of Practice Webinar to be held on Wednesday 15th September 2021. Simply visit farmattractions.net for details and pricing.

New Consumer Facing Video

For Members, NFAN are creating a consumer facing video communicating the key aspects of the Code of Practice. We hope this will be ready before the summer for all NFAN Members to use.

£150 Provided to Members for AAAS Scheme

The AAAS scheme is an independent audit of your farm park against the Code of Practice. NFAN currently provides £150 towards the Inspection costs for any NFAN member and Marsh & Co give all AAAS members discounted insurance.

Find out more at farmattractions.net or email info@farmattractions.co.uk



NFAN Committee

Chairman

Tom Robinson, National Forest Adventure Farm

Vice-Chair Doug Douglas, Avon Valley

Treasurer Steve Taylor, Marsh & Co

Lyndy Birse, Ark Open Farm

Gwen Evans, Cantref Adventure Farm

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All general enquiries should be directed to the NFAN office - tel: 03333 448987, email info@farmattractions.net.

NFAN Awards Return!

We are delighted to confirm we are bringing back the NFAN Awards. With so many excellent innovations during COVID, there is no better way to celebrate our industry's successes.

There will be eight categories for the main awards (with the winners announced during the dinner at January's Annual Conference). We are also, however, launching some specific COVID Awards whose Winners will be announced at the NFAN Open Day at Cotswold Farm Park.



HELPLINE

Free advice for NFAN members

NFAN members are entitled to one free call per annum. The experts can advise you further, subject to their terms of business, with special rates for NFAN members.

Planning Legislation and Business Rates

Barry Davies, Davies & Co. (Chartered Surveyors)
Tel: 01536 524808 Email: info@daviesandco.co.uk
daviesandco.co.uk

Specialising in planning legislation including change of use, enforcement notices and business rates appeals.

Health & Safety/Environmental Health Guidance

Ray Hipkin, Health & Safety Practitioner
Tel: 01844 353407 Email: ray@rayhipkin.co.uk
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Exclusive Insurance Schemes

Steve Taylor, Marsh and Company Insurance Brokers
Tel: 0116 204 3400 Email: staylor@marshcompany.co.uk
marshcompany.co.uk

Providers of competitive, specialist insurance including unique cover extensions for E.coli outbreaks. We offer a site survey and full insurance needs assessment. Marsh & Co are NFAN's Animal Attraction Assurance Scheme Accreditation Supplier.

Catering

Chris Brown, Turpin Smale Catering Consultants
Tel: 020 7620 0011 Email: chris.brown@turpinsmale.co.uk
turpinsmale.co.uk

Advice on all matters catering including help with increasing sales, improving standards and margins.

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