

Focus on farm safety when inviting public



NURSE MURF

By HELEN MURPHY

AGRICULTURAL tourism or agritourism is a rapidly growing part of the agricultural economy in the United States. The USDA estimated that in 2000, 82 million people visited U.S. farms for recreation purposes and that 20 million of them were children under 16. As more and more farms begin incorporating agritourism into their business plans, it is important to keep the littlest visitors in mind.

Some hazards on a farm are relatively easy to identify. Animals, machinery, storage areas, traffic and ponds probably spring to mind when thinking of possible dangers for children.

Some dangers may not be as obvious to adults. Pay particular attention to "attractive nuisances." Attractive nuisances are objects or areas that attract children but could also hurt them. Open pits or ditches, tools or equipment, even abandoned refrigerators can be attractive nuisances. Try to view the farm from the eye level of children and take particular care with objects at their height.

Child-to-chaperone ratio

Parents or other supervising adults are responsible for the health and safety of children. One important safety mea-

sure you can adopt is a required child-to-chaperone ratio. This will greatly increase the chaperones' ability to adequately supervise their charges.

A chaperone-to-child ratio can begin at one adult for every two children 5 and under, escalating to one adult for every 10 children ages 13 to 17.

Age	Children per adult
Under 5	2
5-8	3
9-12	5
13-17	10

Adults and children visiting a farm need to learn the hazards of a farm environment. Children are unpredictable and may not follow safety instructions.

Put it in writing

A farm should tailor the means of communicating safety information to its visitors. "By appointment" locations may be able to rely on direct safety introduction and a staff guide. Farms that are open to the public all day will need to lean heavily on signs and appropriate fencing to keep visitors informed and out of dangerous areas.

For adults, written warnings or signs may be adequate. But for little people, you will need physical barriers. Just because an area says "off limits" does not mean a child won't enter.

Besides on-site safety information, promotional materials should include basic safety information, in particular:

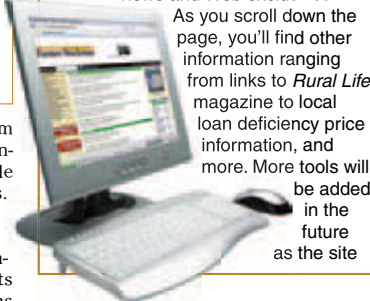
- reminders about items to bring

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(water, repellent, sunscreen)

- reminders about what not to bring (pets, alcohol, lighters)

- the required child-to-chaperone ratio
- proper attire (shoes, long pants, etc.)

The farm owner should identify all potential hazards, develop a checklist and review it regularly, documenting the hazards and all actions taken to reduce the risk of illness or injury.

This information comes primarily from a publication by the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health

Safety — "Agritourism: Health and Safety Guidelines for Children." This document includes easy-to-use sample checklists and targeted strategies for addressing specific hazards. It is available at www.marshfieldclinic.org/agritourism.

Murphy, outreach and education director at the University of Washington Pacific Northwest Agricultural Health and Safety Center, may be reached by phone at 206-616-5906 or by e-mail at hmurf@u.washington.edu.

Robin Russell from the Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center contributed to this report.

Nematode threatens Montana potato industry

By CAROL FLAHERTY

KEEPING cyst nematodes out of Montana's potato crops means farmers must become vigilant managers, says Barry Jacobsen.

"Now that the white potato cyst nematode has been identified in Idaho and the golden potato cyst nematode in Alberta, Canada, there is a serious threat to Montana's seed potato industry," says Jacobsen. Farm equipment that isn't cleaned thoroughly between uses and unofficial sharing of potato seed among growers in neighboring states or nations are threatening Montana's entire seed potato industry, warns Barry Jacobsen.

The Montana State University plant pathologist says now that the white potato cyst nematode has been identified in Idaho and the golden potato cyst nematode in Alberta, "there is a serious threat to Montana's seed potato industry."

If either of the pests moved into Montana "it could threaten one of our most important agricultural industries," Jacobsen says.

Montana produces about 352 million pounds of potatoes annually,

Key Points

- Potato cyst nematodes have been found in Idaho and Canada.
- Montana's seed potato industry is threatened by the pests.
- Cleaning equipment and avoiding moving infested soil are urged.

with most of its production selling at premiums as high-quality seed potatoes used by producers in the Pacific Northwest and Midwest. The Montana crop brought in \$31.7 million in 2006, according to the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service.

The pest threat originates from Idaho — where the white potato cyst nematode was discovered in 2006, making its first appearance in the U.S. and triggering an intensive task force effort to deal with the menace — and Canada — where the golden cyst nematode was found in Alberta and Quebec last year.

These pests can reduce yields by up to 50%, experts believe, and render production of certified seed from impacted areas "nearly impossible," Jacobsen states.

The Alberta discovery is "most trou-

bling," he notes, since it was found in a certified seed potato producing area on two farms. The infestations were identified during a field survey for potato cyst nematode required by the U.S. and Canada as part of a trade protocol.

Under a USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service quarantine, it is not legal for any seed potatoes to enter the U.S. from Alberta. "It is critical that all Montanans obey this regulation," says Jacobsen, "since finding the nematode here could result in expensive quarantine actions by states whose growers purchase our seed potatoes."

Neither nematode has been reported in Montana to date, but the Idaho and Canada outbreaks are alarming Montanans who are warned not to bring in dirt of potatoes from the infected areas.

The nematodes "are two of the most serious potato pests where they occur," says Jacobsen. "Once they infest a new area, they are nearly impossible to eradicate, and effective control options are very expensive."

Though these adult cyst nematodes move only a few feet in the soil by themselves, it can move long distances in infested soil in the cyst stage. The

pin-head-sized females are called the cyst. They are filled with as many as 500 eggs that can move with any process that transports infected soil (as on equipment). They can also move about on seed tubers and containers from field to field.

Movement on seed potatoes is the most critical concern, since the eggs will not hatch unless they are exposed to secretion of host plants such as potato, tomato or eggplant.

Reproduction is rapid, says Jacobsen, noting that populations increase up to 35-fold in one season.

Besides not moving potato seed from Alberta or other areas in North America where the potato cyst is found, Montana producers should take extra care to clean soil from used farm equipment or bins before bringing them onto their farm, urges Jacobsen. Ideally, he adds, the equipment would be cleaned at the point of purchase, but cleaning at a car wash far from the farm is also acceptable.

Equipment dealers purchasing used farm equipment should clean it thoroughly before moving it to Montana.

Flaherty writes for the *MSU News Service*.

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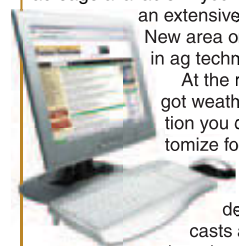
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