

Agritourism: While farming is admirable as a way of life, it is also a business. Many colleges such as K-State are promoting alternative agriculture businesses. Times are changing and in today economy our rural economic development understanding has to change too. I believe Kansas and other states are addressing this through the Agritourism promotion Act.

## Marketing Strategies - Retail: Agritourism & On-Farm Sales

*This document introduces the topic of on-farm sales through Agritourism and offers strategies for success.*

### Introduction

Agritourism is a growing form of niche marketing that, in its broadest definition, involves any agriculture-based activity that brings visitors to a farm. In the five years between 2002 and 2007, the average revenue of Agritourism enterprises in Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska increased by almost 260%, and there is plenty of room for this under-utilized niche market to grow, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2007, Kansas passed the Agritourism Promotion Act to encourage Kansas farmers to get involved in Agritourism. The law limits the liability of Agritourism operators and aids them in marketing. Farm stands and pick-your-own operations represent two major Agritourism activities that lead to the sale of farm products, but there are many other ways to generate income through drawing customers to the farm. The list below offers a few examples.

### Examples of Agritourism Activities:

• Farm stand selling only one farm's products	• Catered on-farm meals (farm-style breakfast, picnic lunch, white table cloth dinners)
• Multi-farmer, on-farm markets or market stands	• Corporate picnics
• U-pick fruits, nuts, or vegetables	• Family reunions
• U-pick flowers or herbs	• On-farm potlucks
• Flower arranging workshops	• On-farm cooking contests
• Canning and cooking classes	• Weddings
• Gardening demonstrations	• Birthday Parties
• Other informational workshops	• Holiday themed gatherings
• Farm tours for the general public (free or at a cost)	• On-farm Easter egg hunts
• Educational school group tours	• Corn mazes
• Wildflower, native plant, or wild edibles tours	• Miniature or frisbee golf courses
• Bird watching or other wildlife centered activities	• Pumpkin patch sales
• Hiking trails	• Hayrides (pulled by tractor or draft animal)
• Camping opportunities	• Haunted barn attractions
• Bonfire or campfire themed events	• Christmas tree sales
• Animal care demonstrations	• Sleigh rides
• Petting zoo experiences	• Barn dances
• Pony or horseback riding	• Harvest festivals
• Fishing	• On-farm bed and breakfasts
• Hunting	• Cross-marketing with a nearby bed and breakfast
• Agritourism trails - linking up with other	• On-farm restaurant, supplied by the farm
Agritourism ventures to market collectively	

1. We are growing trees and flowers to create a botanical garden for our ceremony site. Our ceremony site was created with nature in mind it is filled with lightning bugs, butterflies, Owls and birds of many types. Consumers who are looking for this farm experience for ceremonies like weddings and funerals are our clientele. Everything set up is to bring people back to nature and keep with the heritage of rural living. This is the selling point of our farm activities such as weddings. The barn is not the selling point. In fact you cannot rent the barn without having a ceremony on our farm. We are not trying to get around anything by falling under the Agritourism umbrella. We may not be growing crops like our neighbors, but we are trying to profit off what our property offers and is based on what has been grown naturally. Our land is educational. Things we are building typically is re-purposing wood or trees that have fallen into arches, gazebo's, tables, chairs, gates etc.

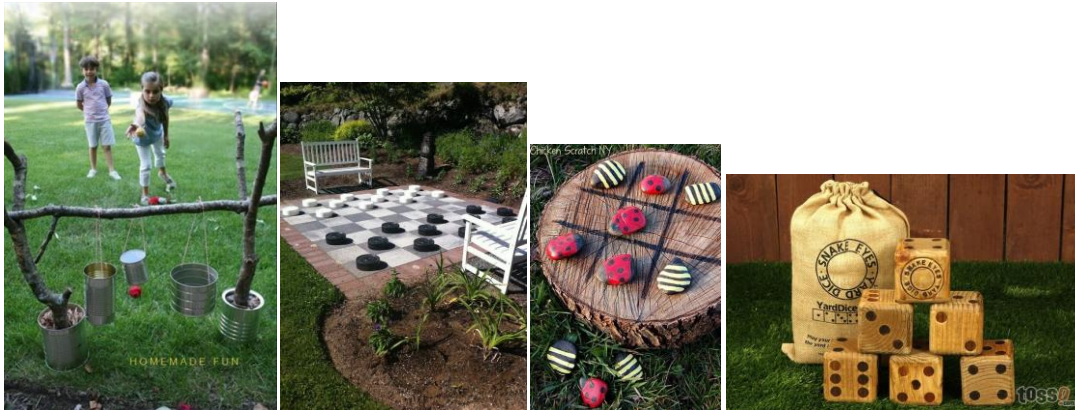




The barn is triple insulated in order to help reduce the noise. The back of the barn faces away from the closest neighbor and has no doors or windows. The trees in the spring, fall, and summer enhance the natural barrier between our neighbors. The electrical transformer was upgraded and the barn runs on a separate meter. A new Rural Water meter was installed and ran to the barn. There are ADA bathroom stalls, panic bars are installed on exit doors, Emergency escape lights are installed in bathroom, and exit signs above the doors. The septic system was sized by the county inspector's to accommodate more than 150 people and more than 30 events per year.



2. Outdoor games will be provided which are made from re-purposed items to enhance the farm wedding experience.

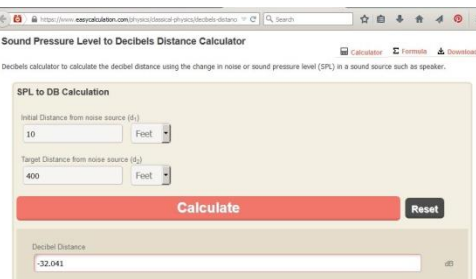
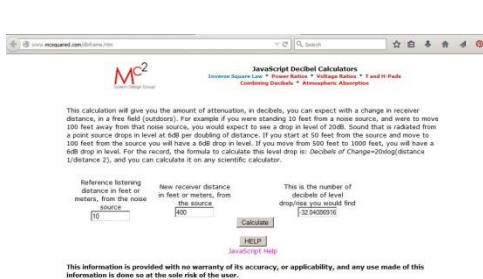
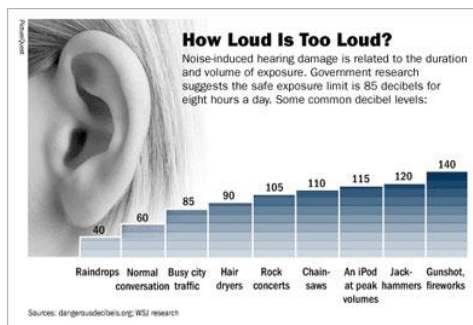
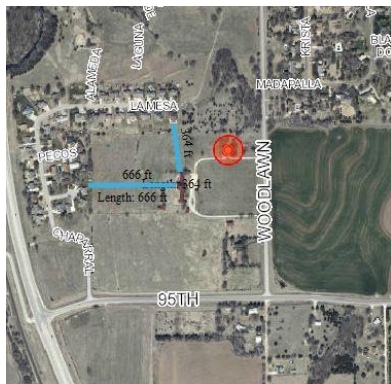


- Issue: Noise was brought up by the neighbors. Mrs. Pauly states our neighbors were never a consideration . Extra cost were incurred specifically because of our consideration for the neighbors. As stated before the Barn is triple insulated to keep the music contained inside. Natural Barriers of tree in the spring, summer, and fall hide the neighbors home from our barn and guests. No speakers that play music from the barn are located outside. No outside bands are allowed. We have stipulated music off by 10:30 p.m. Based on a Decibal calculator sound decreases based on distance. There is no sound ordinance for our property and we could claim the same noise issues from running farm equipment from our neighbors business.



We would like to partner with towns and organizations around us to help give back to the community. Mr. Lampe the mayor of Garden Plaine spoke with Bob and I about how they are trying to increase the business growth in and around Garden Plain. Holding educational siminars or fund raising events might be one way. Simply sponsoring community events might be another. Since Bob and I have moved to the area we have been visiting restraunts and other small businesses in many of the towns around us to help support them.

The Round Barn in Derby is closer in some instances to their neighbors than we are and it has no wooded barrier against sound. The barn isn't insulated and according to the Reeces who own the round barn they do not receive neighbor complaints. They close at midnight.



- **Issue: Flood Zone** --We have received a letter from FEMA which states we are no longer considered in the flood zone. I understand this is a high concern for Mr. Dillion. Bob and I respect his concern. We have not altered the water drainage to cause flooding on our neighbor's property and the fact that flooding has the potential to occur on our property doesn't affect the neighbor. At the end of the day our business will not cause flooding.
- **Issue: Smoking** --Our plan was to allow smoking in designated areas, however after hearing our neighbor's comments we are willing to revise our PUD to a non-smoking facility if necessary.
- **Issue: Roads** --This was addressed by Mr. Jim Weber (County Engineer). He indicated our plan would not cause an issue with the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street road. Increase in traffic is a condition that will increase to rural living. It is merely the result of normal, rural growth and development. We've lived on dirt roads before; they were not maintained as this road is. For example the dirt road leading to Barry Coles business C-Arrow stables is far more treacherous than 63<sup>rd</sup>. The Lake Afton Township maintains these roads immaculately.



- Issue: Alcohol – We are currently requiring a beverage caterer due to hard liquor being allowed. If necessary, we are willing to reduce this to beer and wine only. We recognize hard liquor may introduce a higher level of intoxication.
- Issue number of guests 150 or less. When invitation go out it is hard to know exactly how many guests will arrive. A good rule of thumb is 60%. Staying exactly to 150 or less will be difficult to monitor. Some guests might stay for the wedding but leave and not stay for the reception. Some guests might have a +1. We would like to have a range as standard rather than a hard number which are neighbors might use against us.
- Issue: Security – A neighbor mentioned he has children and is concerned with security and guest from our weddings walking on his property. This same neighbor mentioned the wildlife might be scared away from area. This same neighbor has gunfire coming from his property several times a month. A wedding is a family event. This includes children and babies. In fact we have 4 grandchildren under the age of 6 that often stay with us on the weekend and one that lives with us every day on the property that is 22 month old. They will be around these events too we would never do anything or allow any kind of nonsense that would compromise their safety. We plan to install security cameras as well. Generalized claims of crime, noise and other such nuisances increasing is nothing more than that.... A generalized claims. Our neighbors do not have any facts relating to this as there have been no complaints to date. In fact Mrs. Pauly in our conversation of us providing farm weddings mentioned that we should be careful if the Judge Riddle boys ranch was re-opened. They feared boys would travel over 3 miles down clear creek and cause harm to us.
- Issue: Land Value I contacted the broker that Mr. Pauly quoted stating their land value would decrease. No communication of this written documentation was received. I am currently trying to obtain information in writing to the contrary from our appraiser, but this is not a quick analysis. As I understand it appraiser not brokers should be contacted.
- Issue: Wedding Count 30 per year –Mr. Dillion our neighbor to the East has stated he would be ok if he could be guaranteed this number would not be exceeded. We would be willing to submit to the planning dept information on a quarterly basis of wedding dates. We were willing to lower this count if necessary but our neighbors by their silence have made it very clear they are not interested in anything we have to say.
- Issue: Port-a-potty --This should be removed as our new septic system was sized by the inspection dept for more than the number of events and people we've stated.

- Issue: Deception – Our neighbors claim the planning dept was unaware of our intentions. We have established the planning dept was well aware of our plans to find property to be able to hold farm weddings. I've supplied emails and a letter to Mr. Parnacott when we met with Mr. Peterjohn. The only deception we are aware of is of our neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Pauly and Mr. Brad Hiner whom when we told all about our plans to host farm weddings. We expressed our intent to cause minimal intrusiveness and if they had any concerns at all please let us know so we could work together. From them we received comments like what you do on your property is your business and ok. In fact Mr. Pauly cut our hay in preparation of building the barn and paid us for the hay. Mr. Hiner asked to be able to bid on the insulation we put in our barn as he runs a spray insulation business. Mr. Hiner also asked if he could give us a bid to install recycle rubber for our driveway as it would cause less dust and last longer. We have never been more than courteous to our neighbors. There have been no recorded complaints against us. The barn building permit pulled was for residential, however the mechanical, plumbing and electrical all have commercial permits pulled as well. Sealed drawings for the barn were also submitted. Bud Lett can confirm this information.
- Consumers: I have a petition signed by several brides that are outraged that they are unable to book at our facility. Many engaged couples and their families are currently posting on social media about our beautiful ceremony site and the lack of others in our county. They are being forced to take their money to other counties. Sedgwick County has limited small farm wedding venues available for an affordable price. Wedding venues that are available are closer to Wichita and are higher end. Others are operating under the radar and are more "party barn" oriented. We want to provide a service for small towns with young couples such as Colwich, Conway Springs, Cheney, Garden Plain, etc. Eberly Farms and Prairie Pines costs are not affordable for smaller weddings. The Round Barn is the only affordable farm venue in Sedgwick County that I know of, but they can't possibly book the hundreds of engaged couples that are looking for this rustic back to the farm craze that brides of today are demanding. As far as I know there hasn't been a single farm wedding venue opened in Sedgwick County with new zoning in over 30 years. Yes stables, golf courses, Christmas tree and winery's businesses have added weddings, but they didn't start out as a wedding venue. Rural communities are suffering and many states recognize this by developing the Agritourism Act. The internet is all a buzz about farm wedding. Social media sites such as Pinterest are getting the hopes up of these engaged couples to have a unique experience. The rural communities are expanding and it's not just for agricultural use. 5 acre tracks are being sold as Wichita expands to the unincorporated areas of Sedgwick County. Additional revenue will be brought into small towns in the form of gas, lodging, and antique purchases. These are a few examples only and it could be due to farm weddings. When times get tough things change and communities try to adapt and expand. Someday Sedgwick

county farmers may be growing marijuana for medicinal purposes. This is something we never would have dreamed of a few years ago.

Bob and I appreciate your time in reviewing our proposal. We are not lawyers; we are just two people trying to live the American dream. Bob has served his country with honor for over 30 years. He has fought for our neighbors to have the right to oppose what we are planning. We only ask that our rights be considered too. The right to run a small farm based business from our property. In our hearts we feel we were honest with the two closest neighbors and the planning staff. We wrote letters to other neighbors with no response. We believe we tried our best to communicate and work things out with our neighbors. It appears our neighbors character is to sit back and watched us pour our hard earned retirement money into this business and never once gave us the same consideration to work it out. They shook our hands, looked us in the eye and said not a problem.

Respectfully,

Bob and Kim Stroupe