

# Ag Tourism CLUSTER

AG TOURISM NEWS FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE AND BEYOND

BRINGING ALBERTA TO YOU!

# News

Volume 3, Issue 2  
Fall 2007

Alberta

## MARKETING STRATEGIES – WHAT DOES YOUR ROAD MAP LOOK LIKE?

Having a marketing plan is like having a road map – it helps you know where you are, where you have been, and where you are going.

This spring and summer Alberta's ag tourism cluster projects had some first-hand experience at creating, implementing and evaluating their new and improved marketing plans.

A few examples of some excellent marketing strategies that clusters "harnessed" this summer include:

### Amazing Advertising

- **Get Outta Town**, a driving event in Southern Alberta, produced a well designed, eye popping brochure and secured themselves a major sponsor to help finance it.

### Media Launch

- **Country Drive**, near Red Deer, invited local media to a breakfast and "operator showcase". Having demonstrations, samples and staging photo opportunities gave the media something to write about.



### Innovative Promotions

- **Open Gates on 28**, a promotional campaign headed by six operators in the North East, targeted tourists with brochures and restaurant placemats that were distributed to restaurants and businesses along Highway 28.

### Trade Shows

- **The Country Treasures** group north of Calgary, participated in the city's Rural Routes Trade Show to raise the profile of their driving route, network and build a mailing list.

### And Other Tactics

- **Flavours of the Foothills** farm festival, near Okotoks, focused on the details: themed mascots, greeters, selling special "Flavours of the Foothills BBQ sauce" and using a prize draw to track visitors.

## Making sense out of Marketing Lingo

"If the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign saying, 'Circus is coming to Fairgrounds Sunday' that's advertising. If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk him through town, that's promotion. If the elephant walks through the Mayor's flower bed, that's publicity. If you can get the Mayor to laugh about it, that's public relations. And, if you planned the whole thing, that's marketing!"  
-Author unknown

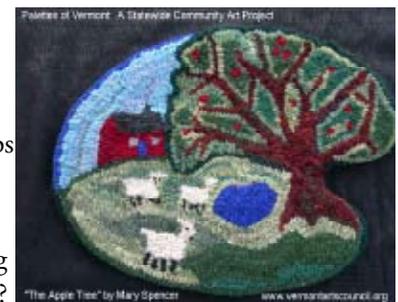
## PALETTES OF VERMONT – AN ALBERTA AG TOURISM TWIST?

The premise of the Palettes of Vermont project is simple – give people of all ages, interests and abilities the opportunity to create, showcase and celebrate art utilizing a local resource.

In partnership with the Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association and other sponsors, 7,000 Vermont maple artist palettes and 30,000 paper palettes were given free of charge to any Vermonter who wished to create art. The results were astounding – within six weeks, all of the palettes had been scooped up by individual artists, organizations, schools and community groups from all over the state. The 12x16" palettes have been created in every conceivable medium – paint, pastels, poetry, fabric, photography, chocolate and cheese.

This is a great example of creatively utilizing a local resource and engaging the community along the way. Could a concept such as this be used to promote your ag tourism events and activities??

For more information go to [www.vermontartscouncil.org](http://www.vermontartscouncil.org)



Aussi disponible en français.

## Marketing Caravan - Web Enhancement Workshops

As a diversified agri-business operator you have long realized the importance of having an internet presence. A well designed, well connected website can: increase sales; drive traffic to your agri-business; reduce telephone enquiry time; automate booking procedures and support on-line shopping.



Alberta Agriculture & Food is partnering with the Canadian Farm Business Management Council to put on three **Web Enhancement Workshops** across Alberta this November:



November 27, 2007 - **Bonnyville**

November 28, 2007 - **Camrose**

November 30, 2007 – **Nanton**

Go to [www.exploredirect.ca](http://www.exploredirect.ca) for program details or call 1-800-296-8112 to register.

Limited seats, call early!

## Agri-preneur Scholarship

Get financial support to attend educational out-of-province, national and international conferences, tours or workshops, related to ag tourism and farm direct marketing. The next deadline for application is **November 30, 2007**.



Go to [www.exploredirect.ca](http://www.exploredirect.ca) for more information or call 780-679-5168 (toll-free via 310-0000).

## Step It Up Conference

A new conference designed for farm direct marketers, farmers' market managers, vendors and supporters.



February 6 and 7, 2008 – Leduc

For more information go to [www.albertafarmfresh.com](http://www.albertafarmfresh.com) or call 780-644-5377

## Culinary Tourism: The Hidden Harvest

Watch for a one-day symposium coming to Calgary in February 2008 on this exciting new tourism trend. A number of ag tourism clusters have strong ties to food and cuisine and it will be interesting to hear about their potential opportunities from the president of the International Culinary Tourism Association. Keep your eyes and ears peeled for more details - coming soon!

For more information on Ag Tourism development in Alberta go to [www.agtourism.ca](http://www.agtourism.ca)  
or contact an Ag-Info Centre New Venture Specialist at 1.866.882.7677

## RAMBLING DOWN THE PEACE COUNTRY'S RANGE ROADS

It's amazing to me when ag tourism operators who live in close geographic proximity (some even neighbors), are in a room together and are asked, "How many of you have visited every operation here?" ... almost always – no one raises their hand.

How can you effectively cross promote each other or even work together without seeing and experiencing first hand what each other has to offer? This can be a strong foundation for future cluster-based marketing and promotional activities.

Ag tourism operators in the Grande Prairie area took a day in August to familiarize themselves with each other's operations. The day was spent visiting six different sites where they toured around and learned more about each respective operation. It also was an opportunity for operators to get feedback from a visitors perspective on various aspects of their site.

This tour was a great opportunity to discover the hidden treasures in the Grande Prairie area including beautiful gardens, feeling the clay used in pottery, seeing a working farm in action, purchasing local product at the farmers market and having tea with the llamas.

This was a solid first step for this group of operators. They plan to build on this experience as they plan for Range Road Ramble promotions for the upcoming tourist season.

How well do you know the other operators in your cluster??



**Llamas come to greet Carmen Andrew**

## A GASTRONOMICAL JOURNEY – FEATURING SEA-TO-SKY FEAST OF FIELDS

Whistler, BC is no longer just for ski bums. A demand for local cuisine brought 200 people to enjoy the 2nd annual Sea-to-Sky, Feast of Fields event that was hosted at a Pemberton farm in BC. Started in 1995, Feast of Fields is described as a "wandering picnic". For \$75 guests can "taste the very best of BC from chefs, vintners, brewers, farmers and food artisans."



### Logistical Challenges

Getting people out of Whistler and to the farm is not without its challenges, shares Astrid Cameron Kent, *Sea-to-Sky Feast Coordinator*. "A 30 minute drive is a long way for some people. We offered a bus the first year and no one used it. The next year we didn't offer it and people wanted it."

### Astrid Learns through Doing

- Recruit volunteers ... and then recruit more.
- SPELL it out - don't assume people understand what it means to sample regional cuisine on the farm.
- Work with people who are excited about growing the event – volunteers, stakeholders and the community need to be on board.
- Brand names matter – celebrity chefs, influential food businesses and trendy food products raise the profile.
- Create packages with local accommodations and cross promote with like minded events (such as Slow Food's Cycle Sunday - 1200 bicyclers visited Pemberton farms).

Learn more about Feast of Fields at

<http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/feast.html>

## Stakeholder Spotlight – What about your local Ag Society?

Agricultural Societies are active partners in 295 Alberta communities. These groups work hard to support agriculture and rural development through activities, such as organizing and supporting various community events (including rodeos and fairs), providing and supporting educational scholarships, providing learning opportunities and operating community facilities.

Ag Societies can be a potential stakeholder in your ag tourism cluster event or promotion in a wide variety of ways:

- Direct involvement and participation in a cluster event. The Redwater & District Agricultural Society was a stop on this year's Country Soul Stroll. Here they hosted interactive educational events and displays to help people understand where their food comes from.
- Financial sponsorship of a cluster event. The Innisfail & District Ag Society and the Cottonwood Gordon Ag Society have been

financial supporters of Red Deer's Country Drive for the last few years.

- In-kind support of a cluster event. Whether it be the donation of a meeting room for cluster planning meetings, helping a cluster project apply for funding when a non-profit status is required, promotional



n-kind support may be available. The Innisfail & District Ag Society help with the Country Drive they have worked with them to help through the Ag Initiatives program.

Local Ag Societies can be a great partner in your ag tourism cluster project or promotion.

To contact the local Ag Society in your area go to [www.albertaagsocieties.ca](http://www.albertaagsocieties.ca)

## CIRCLE FARM TOUR - THE MIGHTY FRASER VALLEY MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Chances are you may have heard of the Circle Farm Tour (CFT) road map in BC. Started in 2003 by local operators and stakeholders in Agassiz-Harrison Mills, this successful idea was picked up by five additional communities: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Langley, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows and Mission.

### Power in Numbers

Pooling resources together, the group was able to secure a grant through Vancouver Coast & Mountain. Initial funding was used on marketing: creating brochures, website lure cards, trade show costs and brochure racks. Now working as a collective marketing campaign, each community contributes \$4000 annually and market-ready operators pay \$450 for a regional listing.

**What makes Success?** "Overall it's the farmers themselves seeing the actual value of being part of tourism and realizing there is another opportunity to expand their business," suggests Allison Longshore from Tourism Abottsford.

Abbotsford's Circle Farm Tour operators commit to three years of involvement and have to meet certain criteria to get in.

**What's in store for 2008?** Evaluation and tracking! Tourism Abbotsford spent the first years creating and implementing a marketing plan – building brand recognition and interest. In 2008 they plan to target people living in Vancouver and track their effort with a coupon system.



Watch for an upgraded Circle Farm Tour website available November 1. Visit [www.circlefarmtour.com](http://www.circlefarmtour.com) to learn more or contact Allison Longshore at 604-859-1701.

Marianne Price with Alberta's Lakeland DMO is currently pursuing bringing a Circle Farm Tour representative to the Lakeland area in 2008. Contact Marianne for more information at 780-645-2913.

RENEWAL.