

Ag Tourism CLUSTER

Ag Tourism news from around the province and beyond

Bringing Alberta to you!

News

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ALBERTA LEADS IN CLUSTER INNOVATION – DON'T MISS OUT!

When we first piloted the Ag Tourism Cluster Development 4-Step Process, one of the key lessons we learned was – “Don’t reinvent the wheel”. Now we’ve applied that principle in a BIG way! In February 2006 we’ll bring the best-of-the-best to rural Alberta for a one-day conference called Harvest the Talent ... Grow the Cluster. After carefully researching ag tourism cluster success stories from across North America we found those with the most good ideas to share and invited them to come to Alberta.

On February 8, 2006 in Bon Accord and again on February 10, 2006 in Okotoks, you’ll have the opportunity to meet these cluster superstars along with some of Alberta’s own exciting initiatives.

You’ll have a chance to learn how a simple sponsorship plan can grow a parade into a significant community event. You’ll discover unique promotion ideas that can bump your cluster activities to the top of P.R. charts.

This unique conference will be popular you’ll want to register early. Look for the brochure and registration form for Harvest the Talent Grow the Cluster inside this newsletter or go to www.agtourism.ca – don’t miss out!

RED DEER CLUSTER
FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS FOR THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED!

In 2004 the Red Deer cluster set the stage for partnering by running two very successful FAM tours. They were the the audience. Building relationships and seeing each other’s operations first hand laid the ground work for the group to open their gates to the public.

This past summer the Red Deer cluster launched a driving tour event called Country Drive '05. Taking lessons learned from other clusters the group developed some excellent up front materials including a first rate application form with criteria for involvement.

They set out on an ambitious promotional campaign. It allowed them to share the workload and capitalize on their individual resources and networks. The campaign resulted in some good publicity that was needed for this first time event.

Kudos!
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EVALUATING SUCCESS

The group carefully analyzed the event for things they would do differently. They realized the vast majority of the objectives they set out to achieve were met. However, there are always things to change in hind-sight. More rigor in the application process may have encouraged operators to take more ownership for their event. As well asking for more information at the time of application (ie. photos, copy of insurance) may have saved some hassle later on. Overall the glowing testimonials from visitors clearly show the event was indeed a success.

NEXT STEPS

The group is currently considering doing the Country Drive again next year or maybe even a different ag tourism cluster event.

CONTACT

Janice Shimek, Tourism Red Deer, 403.342.1056
Email: janice@tourismreddeer.net

Partners in the Northeast Alberta Ag Tourism Cluster come together on an already solid foundation. Many members of the group have worked together on an event called Taste of the Lakeland. This successful event is a special Farmers' Market that focuses on the vendors from their area and the bounty of the products they produce. Celebrity chef, John Berry, cooks up special meals using local products to be auctioned off. "The fact that it's on a Sunday, as opposed to a weekday like most of the markets around here allows a different group of people to come out", says Marianne Price formerly of the Cold Lake Ag Society. They do advertising and public relations work to ensure the success of the event and are planning to add more activities for the kids next year.

Making it Happen!

NEXT STEPS

Building on their success the group has added some new partners and are taking on a project called the

Ag Adventure Passport. The promotion will run from June to October, 2006 and encompasses four major ag tourism events in the area, including the Taste of the Lakeland, as well as four key area ag tourism operations. The incentive for getting 5 stamps on a passport are significant prizes including a grand prize of a weekend getaway for two, as well as recreation passes and event tickets. The prizing allows exposure for more partners and encourages visitors to keep coming back for more fun.

KEY PARTNER

The area's Destination Marketing Association (DMO), Alberta's Lakeland, is a key partner in the project. Their tourism guide will showcase the project and passport on a two-page spread. See page 4 for more on how your ag tourism cluster can benefit from working with a DMO.

CONTACT:

Marianne Price, Alberta's Lakeland DMO
780.645.2913 or 888.645.4155
Email: iht@albertaslakeland.com



WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS



Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's staff and partners are now working proactively with seven ag tourism clusters in the province - Northeast Alberta, Rural Edmonton, Red Deer, North Calgary, South Calgary, Southwest Alberta, and South Central Alberta.

Thanks to some one time funding we are able to offer a little bit of assistance to these clusters. The assistance comes in the form of a local coordinator working to enhance the inventory or database of ag tourism assets in the cluster. In some cases these folks are also providing coordination for new cluster projects.

Thank you to all the Ag Tourism Cluster Coordinators for their enthusiasm and hard work!

North East Alberta	Sharil Baumgardner	780.724.3669
North Calgary	Grace Frost	403.335.4408
South Central Alberta	Cheryl Neufeld	403.345.5623
South West Alberta	Patricia Lundy	403.563.5362
South Calgary	Malcolm Anderson	403.652.5034
Rural Edmonton	Patty Milligan	780.921.3657
Red Deer	Janice Shimek	403.342.1056

(Past Country Drive '05 coordinator:
Lori Hamilton 403.309.5070)



U PCOMING EVENTS

● AG TOURISM CLUSTER OPERATOR MEETING North Calgary- January 10, 2006

Ag Tourism Cluster development is new to the north Calgary area. Come learn how your market ready ag tourism venture can benefit from the "strength in numbers". Contact: Grace Frost, Cluster Coordinator, 403.335.4408

● AG TOURISM CLUSTER OPERATOR MEETING South Calgary- January 17, 2006

New faces and new ideas! Come on out if you have a market ready ag tourism venture or an interest in seeing an ag tourism cluster initiative take off in the area. Contact: Malcolm Anderson, Cluster Coordinator, 403.652.5034

● OPENING YOUR GATES TO AG TOURISM WORKSHOP Red Deer, Westerner Park - January 24, 2006

Considering a new ag tourism venture on your farm or ranch? Looking for a refresher course? You'll be interested in attending this workshop. Contact: Tourism Red Deer, 1.800.215.8946

● HARVEST THE TALENT ... GROW THE CLUSTER Bon Accord, February 8, 2006 or Okotoks, February 10, 2006

A one-day conference to showcase ag tourism cluster successes. For more information go to www.agtourism.ca



N EW RESOURCES

Planning a Familiarization (FAM) tour or driving route event? Two new publications have recently been released that will help guide you down the planning pathway.

Coordinating Ag Tourism Familiarization Tours (Agdex 888-6) and Establishing Ag Tourism Routes (Agdex 888-5) are both available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. To order these and other ag tourism related publications go to www.agtourism.ca or call 1.800.292.5697

Web Watch:

While researching various ag tourism clusters from across North America for the Harvest the Talent – Grow the Cluster conference, we discovered some very interesting initiatives. For more examples go to www.agtourism.ca

Washington Farms
Napa Yolano Harvest Trails
Silos and Smokestacks
Fauquier County

www.visitwashingtonfarms.com
www.napayolanoharvesttrails.org
www.silosandsmokestacks.org
www.fauquiercounty.gov/visitors/index.cfm?page=agri-tourism
www.agricluster.org

Agri-Cluster New York

CLUSTER CORNER

KEYS TO SUCCESS

TIPS ON WORKING IN GROUPS

When working in groups, at some point conflict will occur. The following ground rules are good guidelines to keep in mind and to share with others in your group the next time you find yourself in a heated meeting:

- Listen carefully and with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Try not to cut people off.
- Speak for yourself, not as the representative of any group. Remember that others are speaking for themselves too.
- If something someone say hurts or bothers you, say so, and say why.
- It's okay to disagree, but be sure to show respect for one another.
- Help the chairperson keep things on track.

Source - Study Circle Resource Center (SCRC) and Martine Bolinger, Organizational Development Intern, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development



AG TOURISM CLUSTERS - BEYOND BORDERS STROLLING OF THE HEIFERS



The first thing that catches you about this ag tourism cluster initiative is the name itself. The Strolling of the Heifers Parade and Festival takes place on a weekend in June in Battleboro, Vermont. Their website calls it Vermont's light-hearted version of Spain's Running of the Bulls. June is National Dairy Month in the U.S, and the event is sponsored in part by Turkey Hill Dairy. The four-day celebration was created to raise public awareness of the importance of sustaining agriculture and family-owned farms in order to maintain Vermont's unique character, beautiful landscape and rural way of life. Notably, the event has been named one of Vermont's Top Ten Summer Events by the state's Chamber of Commerce for the third year in a row. Equally important, the Heifer Parade and Festival's founder Orly Munzing, was named one of Vermont's "heroes" in the spring issue of Vermont Life magazine.

The event involves, obviously, a parade of heifers, but also includes self-guided farm tours, a festival with live entertainment and agriculture related exhibits, a farmers' market, and an educational forum. They continue to add unique events and activities like the heifer ball, best chef contest, antique farm equipment show and the "create a funky heifer" contest.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

This ag tourism cluster has excelled in promoting their event. They have grown from 10 000 attendants the first year, to 20 000 the second and 30 000 in their third year! They use a multitude of marketing tactics including a promotional video and have attracted attention around the world.

They also take sponsorship seriously and now get most of their funding from corporate sponsors. The sponsor section on their website shows a grid with various buy-in levels and even case studies demonstrating a sponsor's return on investment.

To learn more about what's behind the success of the Strolling of the Heifers come to Harvest the Talent – Grow the Cluster, where dairy farmers, Charlie and Helen Robb, will present their story and share their learnings. Also visit www.strollingoftheheifers.org/index.php and www.robbfamilyfarm.com.

While you're surfing check out a couple of the other guest clusters that will be presenting at Harvest the Talent – Grow the Cluster:

www.rural-ramble.com
www.loudounfarms.org

Stakeholder Spotlight

DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION -- CHINOOK COUNTRY TOURIST ASSOCIATION

There are Destinations Marketing Organizations or DMOs across Alberta working to promote tourism in their specific areas. Recently I spoke with Kimberly Lyall from Chinook Country Tourist Association in Southwest Alberta about the role of the DMO in ag tourism cluster development.

"These are concrete initiatives that we in turn can promote as tourism offerings that are unique to our area", says Kimberly of the ag tourism cluster initiatives in southern Alberta. Kimberly also notes that they have a role in helping to enhance these projects by bringing expertise in the tourism industry to the table. Not to mention help to move projects along with encouragement and an element of credibility.

Kimberly talks about Chinook Country Tourist Association as being an organization that is built on partnerships. She says they

have a role to help facilitate these kinds of partnership activities in the region. They have a commitment to working with smaller rural communities and the ag tourism cluster projects provide a perfect link for them.

As with most DMOs, Chinook Country Tourist Association produces a guide, maps and a website to attract visitors. They also run the Lethbridge Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and have good relationships with the other smaller VICs in the area. As well, they represent the region at national and international travel tradeshows.

Your DMO could be a local tourism champion for your ag tourism cluster. For a list of Destination Marketing Organizations in Alberta go to www.industry.travelalberta.com and look under Related Tourism Organizations.

For more information on Ag Tourism development in Alberta go to www.agtourism.ca or contact an Ag-Info Centre New Venture Specialist at 1.866.882.7677

