



# NAA RESOURCE

## Managing Public Visitation

The National Aquaculture Association (NAA) provides the following guidance to assist U.S. aquaculture entities in managing on-farm visits by the public. This guidance may not fit every farm or business and interested readers are advised to adapt these suggestions to fit their situation or need.

It is common for a farm to have several planned and unplanned visitors in and out throughout the day: veterinarians, sales people, consultants and even a curious passer-by. Trespassers will take advantage of this and have been known to arrive on farms claiming to be USDA representatives or vendor company personnel. It is important to verify the identity of any unexpected visitors. Don't be afraid to ask for credentials or other forms of identification. If you do have a visitor on the farm, escort them at all times. Make sure all family members and employees know how to handle an unexpected visitor. Have a written protocol in place and review it with everyone who works at the farm.

Carefully evaluate all inquiries and information requests you receive by phone, mail or online. It is important to gather as much information as possible about who is requesting the information and why - and reply in writing. Monitor threats by watching for warning signs, such as an increase in requests for information and unusual interest in gaining employment. You can use Google Alerts to monitor media coverage of your farm name, industry and region. Activists often use social media to organize so search social media regularly.

There have been recent incidents of unauthorized individuals gaining access to farms by trespassing, breaking into barns at night, taking photos from nearby public property or using drones. It is important to post no trespassing signs and report details of any suspicious behavior to law enforcement.

While farm visits are an excellent opportunity to tell the very good story of U.S. aquaculture to the general public, the press, and customers, allowing visitors into the business can have unintended consequences. What visitors see and what they do not see can have a greater impact than what is said by their tour guide.

### **Key points to consider before deciding to welcome visitors include:**

- General appearance of the farm and tour guide. Well-maintained buildings, production systems and grounds and a tour guide that is dressed in clean clothes communicates the care and attention provided overall and gives a sense that the fish or shellfish are equally well cared for. It is best to not bring visitors on to the facility when it is not at its best.
- Welcome visitors during a brief orientation that describes the farm history, animals being grown, biosecurity plan and visitor restrictions, production systems, intended markets and include safety requirements, and picture and video restrictions.
- Escort visitors at all times. Instruct employees to immediately report all unescorted visitors to management and remain with them until management arrives.
- Dead fish and vultures. While there are times when disease strikes and animals die, no visitors should be allowed on the facility when there are dead animals or vultures around. This is both for biosecurity (to prevent unintended further spread of disease) and to avoid misunderstandings related to the business.
- Visitor reactions will be negative if the following scenes are observed on farms:
  - Cattle in ponds.
  - Litter, weedy or dead piles of vegetation in or near ponds, raceways, buildings and grounds.
  - Spent shotgun or rifle shells.
  - Dead harvest bycatch (fish or turtles) on levees.
  - Equipment “graveyards.”
  - Visible pond conditions that prompt a response such as “I wouldn’t eat anything out of there,” due to very dense blooms, floating vegetation or debris, etc.
  - Live or dead fish or tadpoles on the floor of a hatchery or production systems.
  - Broken, discarded tools, nets, or construction material or spilled feed.
  - Boats, docks or landings that are cluttered with broken gear, uncoiled lines, dead shellfish, or litter.
  - Discarded, empty or spilled fuel, feed, therapeutic or chemical containers.
  - Employees need to be trained in terms of appropriate language and actions at all times, but especially when visitors are present.
  - Signage to restrict access to bio-secure and other areas.

- Visitor orientation session to create safety awareness and posting of signage identifying potential safety hazards for visitors; avoid taking visitors into areas with safety hazards (e.g., slip, trip and fall).
- Check for state agritourism statutes that may provide liability protection and may require specific signage or other requirements. Consider whether you want visitors to sign forms that acknowledge they have been briefed on safety protocols and waive their liability in case of injury.
- Develop a photographer policy that prohibits or restricts still photographs and videos.
- Be certain that the only chemicals stored on the premises are ones that are labeled for use on fish or shellfish farms. Do not store other farm chemicals on the fish farm.
- If vegetated ditches are part of the farm's effluent management, be sure to explain their role to visitors.

**It is important to develop a written, uniform visitor policy, even if that policy is that no visitors are allowed. If you do welcome visitors, be sure to include the following:**

- Periodic review of insurance & liability protection.
- Establish hours for visitation.
- All visitors sign a visitors log book. Include with the sign-in questions that ask if visitors have been on another farm within the last 48 hours, whether they have any communicable diseases or whether they are feeling ill.
- Post signs that provide instructions for visitors.
- Post signage for visitor parking.
- Control access to biosecure, unsafe, or proprietary areas.
- Provide protective equipment – boots, hair nets (processing).
- Provide water & restrooms.
- Offer brochures or farm related free items
- Plan the tour route to avoid areas with hazards and those areas that are off-limits to visitors.



*Please keep in mind this information is provided for informational purposes only. Seek individualized, professional legal advice prior to implementing these practices to ensure compliance with legal standards and contact local law enforcement if you anticipate protests. Learn your rights and protections under local, state or federal law.*

Document created in proud partnership with the [Animal Agriculture Alliance](#).



Do not hesitate to contact the NAA with questions or comments at (251) 504-6995 or [naa@nationalaquaculture.org](mailto:naa@nationalaquaculture.org)