



### LOOK OUT FOR

Spring barley establishment advice **p56**  
Six farm pick-ups battle it out **p64**  
Hunt is on for next Farmers Apprentice **p82**

# Open Farm Sunday: Why you should get involved

Now in its 12th year, Open Farm Sunday gives all farmers the opportunity to educate and engage with the British general public at a muddy boots level. **Melanie Jenkins** looks at the benefits of getting stuck in

**O**pen Farm Sunday has become one of the largest cross-farm events in the farming calendar and is the industry's annual open day.

It has been opening farm gates and visitors' minds since 2006, giving farmers and the public a chance to connect.

Every June, hundreds of farm-

ers welcome the public onto their farms and offer insight into what it is truly like to farm in the UK.

Run by Linking Environment and Farming (Leaf), the event sees all types of producers get involved, from large arable estates in the east to mixed units in the depths of Wales, as well as farm parks, hop gardens and llama farms.

Working towards Leaf's vision of a more sustainable farming future, Open Farm Sunday helps farmers show the public what their day-to-day lives involve.

Many host farm walks, tractor and trailer rides, demonstrations and talks, often with a number of associated industry representatives also getting involved.



Trailer rides are a popular part of the Open Farm Sunday events held at Gatcombe Farm in Devon

## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

**Abi Reader, Goldsland Farm, Wenvoe, Wales**

Getting involved with Open Farm Sunday has been a real eye-opener for Welsh farmer Abi Reader, showing her the massive difference that opening just one farm to the public can make.

Milking 180 cows on Goldsland Farm in the Vale of Glamorgan, Abi farms in partnership with her father John and uncle Robert on the 324ha mixed enterprise, which also runs a flock of 200 Poll Dorset sheep and grows barley and maize for feed.

She has taken part in Open Farm Sunday for the past four years and although she initially got involved through guilt, she has found the event to be a huge success.

"I was on a leadership course at the time and was heavily involved with the NFU, and could see that the key to success in farming was letting the public know what we do."

In the first year Abi wasn't sure what to expect: "I was scared to death, worried about what people would see and that they would hate it."

Despite only being listed on Leaf's website and simply dropping off leaflets at local schools and shops, the farm's debut event had 300 visitors, with

neighbours, the NFU and Young Farmers all helping out.

### HUGE SUCCESS

"At the end of the day there were visitors hanging around and they asked me what they could do to help and support me. All I could say was to buy British, Welsh and Red Tractor foods."

Following the event, in November 2014, Abi was on a train to London when she was approached by a woman and her two young sons.

"They had recognised me from the event and said that as a result they only ever bought British and Red Tractor foods. I realised just how important it is to connect to the public and the difference that opening just one farm can make."

Since then, her farm has held an event every year, with visitors jumping to 1,000 in 2015 and to 3,000 in 2017. "I am not afraid now. It is stressful but absolutely worth it," she says.

The day has become quite a community gathering, with the Wenvoe Wildlife Group – which is very involved in a number of nature projects on the farm – holding wildlife farm tours.

Other local farmers attend to give talks on beef, do sheep shearing and baling demonstrations, and give tractor and trailer rides. "It is surprising just who is happy to



Abi Reader is set to hold her fifth event

come and contribute in any way they can," she says.

"I put an advert on Facebook for local stall holders to come along and sell for free and we have a lot of stalls now."

These range from the local flying club to a man with an owl, a local art group, cooking demonstrations and a local author.

"It creates wellbeing in the community and people get a lot out of it," she adds. "The villagers from Wenvoe come year after year to be a part of it and each time bring their friends."

If farmers are worried about doing it on their own farm, Abi suggests helping at another event. "I cannot fault Leaf for developing such an amazing event. If more take it up in the future and we can all change one person's mind, we can go far."

## ADVICE FROM PARTICIPANTS

**Adam Reeves, farm manager, Quicke's dairy, Newton St Cyres, Devon**

A family farm for more than 450 years, Quicke's creates handmade cheddar using milk from a 600-cow herd, on just under 120ha of rotational grazing. They have been participating in Open Farm Sunday since 2011 and the event has grown each year.

**\* Do a risk assessment.** "The biggest thing is to take health and safety seriously, but do not let it put you off," says Adam. Use blue rope to create passageways and safe zones, with educational notices for children and plenty of handwash.

**\* Make use of resources.** "Be sure to use the resources that Leaf makes available."

**\* Engage with children.** "Make a question trail to encourage kids to go see everything on the farm."

**\* Plan ahead.** "Bear in mind that you might have more people than you expect, so plan car parking."

**\* Do it for free.** "Don't worry about making money – it's about making the visitors love farming."

**\* Just do it.** "The one thing that staggers us every year is that someone new from our village, who has never been to the farm before, comes along. It is brilliant."

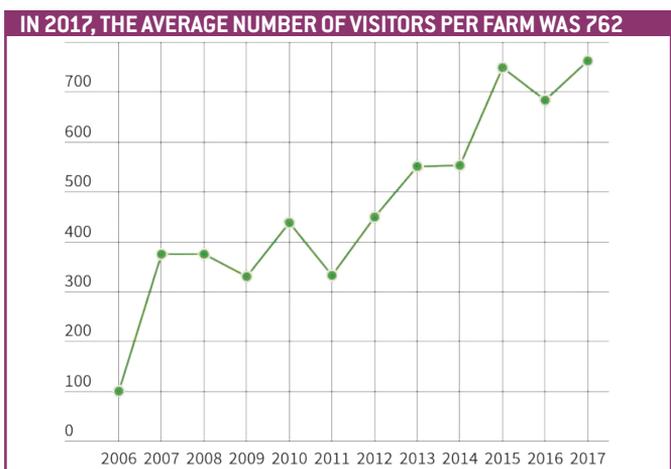
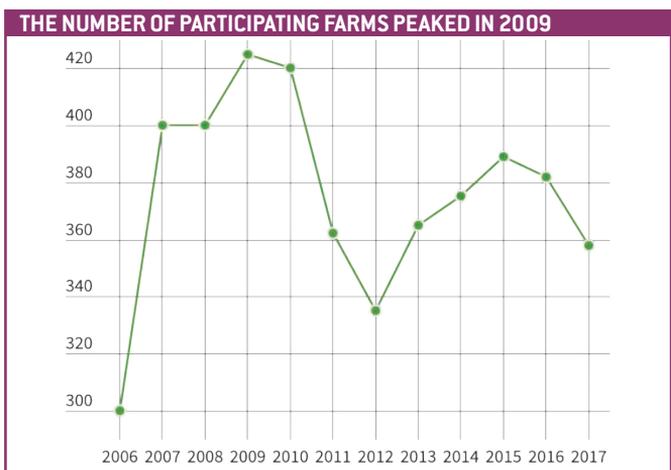
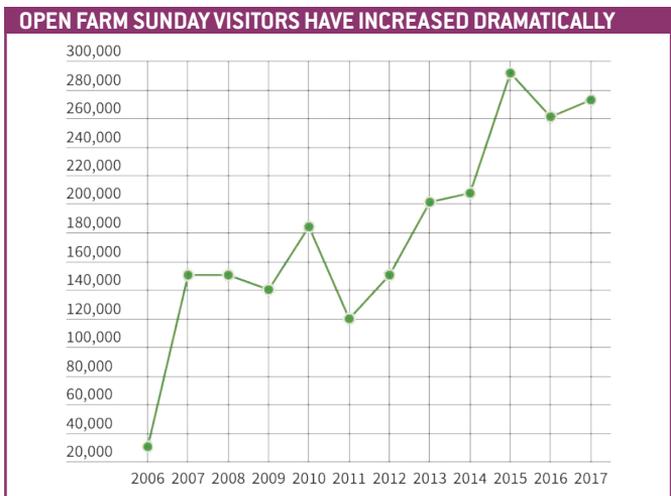
'The amount farmers get in BPS cash is no measure of wealth'

Stephen Carr Opinion p27

GET IN TOUCH

- EMAIL farmersweekly@proagrica.com
- ONLINE www.fwi.co.uk/farm-life
- FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/farmersweeklyuk

- TWITTER @farmersweekly
- INSTAGRAM @farmersweekly
- WHATSAPP 07881 803 480



**Robert and Julie Reed, Gatcombe Farm, Seaton, Devon**

Calving all year round and using five Lely robots, the Reed family have hosted an Open Farm Sunday event on their 340-cow dairy farm for the past two years. After visiting the USA and Canada and seeing how open doors they are, Robert wanted to take the opportunity to welcome visitors to his farm.

**\* Get neighbouring farmers and trade representatives involved.** "Visitors want to chat and talk to them," says Robert.

**\* Keep the farm tidy.** This will make life so much easier.

**\* Have demonstrations.** "The vet does a demonstration of a cow's organs by using face paint on a cow. A local farmer does sheep shearing and his wife does wool spinning, while another demonstrates foot trimming on the cows each hour."

**\* Have catering facilities.** "The local farm shop does the catering and a local brewery and vineyard also attend."

**\* Do not charge but do donate to charity.** "Pick a good local charity. Last year we donated to Devon Air Ambulance and this year to Devon Blood Bikes."

**\* Trailer rides.** "These are the highlight of some people's day."

**\* Allow well-behaved dogs.** "The first year we said no to dogs, which we found was wrong. We had more misbehaving children than dogs."

**\* Don't be afraid to ask for help.**

**Open Farm Sunday in numbers**



Over 2 million farm visitors since 2006



1,600 host farms since 2006

**In 2017...**



358 farms hosted events



272,700 visitors to farms



18% of visitors had never been on a farm before



86% of visitors said they learned something new

**HOW TO GET INVOLVED**

\* Open Farm Sunday will be held on 10 June 2018.

Organisers say that to date more than half of all farmers who have registered to take part in the day this year are doing so for the

first time. All host farmers are given a range of free resources plus help and support.

It is free to participate and all farmers are encouraged to join, whatever the size and scale of the

event that they wish to hold.

For more information on Open Farm Sunday 2018 or to register your farm's participation this year, visit [www.farmsunday.org/open-my-farm](http://www.farmsunday.org/open-my-farm)