

A PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR FARM AND RANCH RECREATION

Overall Comment

Establishing a Classification System for farm and ranch recreation is plowing new ground. At the national and international levels, no model exists. And, yet, credible product characterization is critical to effective marketing. This is equally true from the perspective of the potential customer as well as for the marketing intermediary.

Establishing such a classification system is controversial for suppliers who are rightfully concerned about the assessment process leading up to the various categories within such a system. Issues that farmers and ranchers are worried about include who is going to establish the criteria for categorical assessment, who is the assessor/evaluator, whether there is any room for input from the farmer or rancher, whether the supplier can move from one category to another and how that is accomplished.

It is our belief that we must get beyond such supplier concerns and develop and implement a classification strategy that delivers a high level of product certainty to consumers. A few questions to consider:

- How do you classify your operation?
- What basic standards need modification? What additional basic standards might you suggest?
- Comments on categories?
- Comments on differentiation characteristics?

Basic Standards for a Farm and Ranch Recreation Program

1. Owner/operator resides on the premises for at least nine months of the year.
2. At least one-third of the farm's or ranch's income is from agriculture.
3. Owner/operator and appropriate staff have undergone formal hospitality training and have an ongoing professional development plan.
4. Standard customer evaluation procedures are in place.
5. Appropriate liability insurance is current.

6. Customer selection is not at all influenced by race, religion, or gender.
7. All farm and ranch recreation operators have marketing plans approved by the national marketing association being created in this initiative.
8. All farm and ranch recreation suppliers are committed to communicating a positive image and practical knowledge of agriculture with their guests.

Four Categories for Overnight Destinations

1. Homestead – Private rooms and baths in stand-alone guest quarters
2. Pioneer – Private rooms and baths in ranch house
3. Frontier – Private rooms with shared baths and/or showerhouse
4. Outpost – Cabins, tents, teepees, pit toilets, shared bath facilities

These categories will be differentiated by:

1. Type of accommodations (e.g., cabin, lodge, RV facility, etc.)
2. Bathroom facilities (e.g., private, semi-private, public, etc.)
3. Meals (one, two, or three meals provided on a daily basis)
4. Site/Location (e.g., remoteness, adjacent to wildlife refuge, etc.)
5. Communication Hook-ups (e.g., telephone, television, internet access)
6. Activities – On site (e.g., horseback riding, chores, fishing, etc.)
7. Activities – Off site (e.g., historical tour, scenic excursion, fishing, etc.)
8. Watchable Wildlife
9. Hunting Program (e.g., big game, upland bird, etc.)
10. Licensed Outfitter Services (e.g., hunting, fishing, etc.)
11. Agricultural-Based Programs (e.g., learning/participating in a farm or ranch operational activity)
12. Cross Cultural-Based Program (e.g., program developed with specific time devoted to discussing the agricultural way of life)
13. Seasonal/Year-round
14. Disability Access
15. To be determined

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Three Categories for Day Visitations

Many farm and ranch recreation opportunities are offered on a daily basis versus an overnight basis. These categories help the potential customer know what is available on a daily basis as they relate to their individually preferred options. The basic standards identified earlier apply here as well.

1. **The Schoolhouse** – On site programs and activities with an interpretive, educational, and/or storytelling themes (e.g., Lewis and Clark interpretive tour of a ranch along the Lewis and Clark trail, etc.)
 - These are done by owner, manager, hired hand, etc.
 - Could be done by offsite guide
 - Could involve a meal, specific hands-on activities, etc.
 - Could involve various modes of transportation
2. **The Harvest** – Activities involving the harvest of vegetables, fruits, upland game birds, big game, etc. (e.g., u-pick truck garden, fee hunting, etc.)
3. **The Range Rider** – Outdoor action-oriented activities with little educational/interpretive focus (e.g., horseback riding, catch and release fishing, varmint hunting, etc.)