

Designing Accessible AgriTourism: Welcoming visitors of all abilities

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Ohio has almost 700 farms with an agritourism feature, which brings visitors to vineyards, orchards, and corn mazes, but are these farms welcoming to everyone?

The Americans with Disabilities Act states that any business which is open to the public must be accessible to people with disabilities. This can be a challenge in an outdoor, farm environment, but with planning and proactive design, agritourism farms can be accessible to everyone.

What is accessibility?

Accessibility means that a person with a disability can independently use a product, service, or facility

An accessible agritourism business welcomes:

- The 14% of Ohioans who have a disability
- Children in strollers or wagons
- Anyone who has trouble with balance or walking

The Americans with Disabilities Act:

- The ADA is a federal law that protects people from discrimination based on their disability, and requires businesses and events which are open to the public to be accessible to people with disabilities

Which businesses have to be accessible?

- Any business or event that is open to the public
- There is no exemption for businesses “just open a few weeks”

How much do I have to spend to make my site accessible?

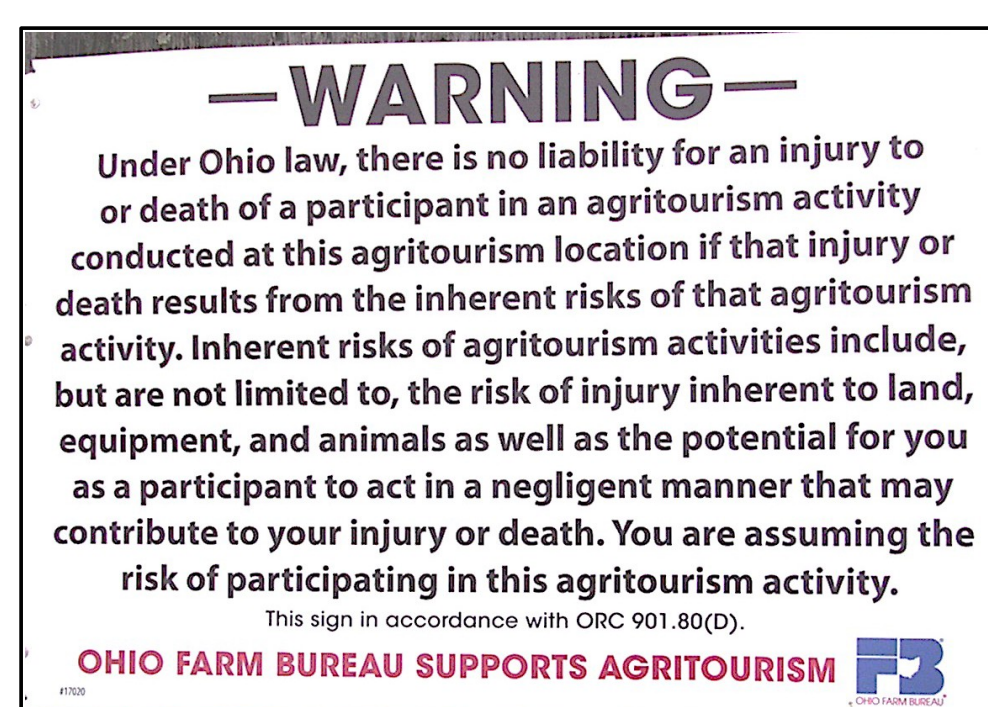
- There is no spending limit or minimum
- If an property owner said they cannot make their site accessible due to “undue financial hardship” a court would consider total assets of the business, not just the income of the agritourism site

Are there funds or resources available to make my business accessible?

- IRS form 8826 “Disabled Access Credit” – up to \$5,000 credit for accommodations, barrier removal, alterations to make business accessible or purchase of adaptive equipment

Ohio AgriTourism Law (Sept 2016)

- Property owners are not required to remove risks that are inherent to AgriTourism activity such as surface & subsurface conditions of land, animals (except vicious dogs), farm equipment, and the participants failure to follow instructions
- Property owners must post signs at each agritourism activity to receive liability protection
- **Owners are still required to make their agritourism sites accessible**



Accessibility checklist

Accessible website

- Text and images should be readable by a screen reader
- Use high contrast images, and alt-text to describe pictures

Promotional and marketing materials

- Promotional materials must be current and available in other formats
- Include contact information to request accommodations: <https://ada.osu.edu/resources/statements.htm>

Signs

- Use large print,
- post signs to direct people to accessible restrooms, exits, entrances

Parking

- Reserve spaces and post signs for accessible parking in a smooth, flat section of the parking area, near the entrance

Emergency exits & procedures

- Exits should be clearly marked

Restrooms

- If you provide at least one restroom, it must be accessible

Entrances and ticket booths

- Have written signs with prices & FAQs
- At least one entrance must be accessible, and at least 32" wide



For an accessible ticket booth, use a ramp, or an entrance with no thresholds, steps or barriers

Walking paths and surfaces

- Paths should wide enough for a wheelchair to pass through, and turn around
- At least 36-inch-wide path
 - 60-inch circle for turn around
- If roots, branches or barriers are in the path, the pathway should be wide enough to avoid the obstruction
- When possible (based on terrain and site) paths should be well mowed, raked, and smooth with clearly marked trails

Accommodation requests

What is an accommodation?

A modification or adjustment that minimizes or eliminates the impact of a disability, allowing equal access to facilities, events or information

Answering questions about accessibility and requests for accommodations

- If you are asked if your business is accessible, list specific areas that are
- Explain how a person could access an area that may not be accessible (they could drive their own vehicle to the pumpkin patch instead of riding the hay wagon)
- Ask for time to provide accommodations, up to a week is reasonable for most requests

Do you have to agree to every accommodation request?

Not if it is an unreasonable request:

- Any request which creates a safety or health hazard for the individual or others
- Example:
 - If the individual cannot access the maze or hay wagon on their own, or with the assistance of their caregiver
- Any request which fundamentally alters an essential aspect of the service, activity or program provided
- Example:
 - Making a barn or the corn maze dust or pollen free (not possible due to the nature of a corn maze, or a barn)
- Any request which creates an undue financial or administrative burden

Accessible agritourism transportation



Accessible wagon with a ramp attached to the back allows everyone to enjoy the ride – with or without the hay

Accessibility Solutions

Corn maze

- Mow the maze/path, apply herbicide to the path, till it under, continue to apply herbicide until there are no plants in the path, smooth/compact the path
 - Repeat throughout the season as necessary
- Maintain the open path by cutting back corn stalks which hang over the path



Accessible corn maze at Lynd's Fruit Farm, Pataskala, OH

Orchards, Pumpkin patches, vineyards, Christmas tree farms

- Plant trees, pumpkins or vines so there will be at least a 36" path between rows of plants
- Mow grass in paths frequently
- For a pumpkin patch, or other garden with plants that spread, mow vertical and horizontal rows to allow people to access all sides of the patch



Set aside an area on the edges of the orchard that are accessible with wider paths, parking adjacent to the orchard

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Americans with Disabilities Act: www.ada.gov
- ADA Guide for Small Businesses: www.ada.gov/smbusgd.pdf
- A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities: <https://adata.org/publication/temporary-eventsguide>
- United State Access Board, guidelines and standards: www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-aba-standards/aba-standards/chapter-10-recreation-facilities

