



FACT SHEET 7.9

NEIGHBOR RELATIONS: COMMUNICATION

Hobby farms can be found in all areas of the country with their small size making them ideal to be located in suburban and rural neighborhoods. Even though hobby farmers tend to manage less land and fewer animals, they still have to deal with some of the challenges that larger agricultural operations face, just on a smaller scale and often with less time and assistance.

These challenges can include manure management, noise and odor control, pest management, and erosion. However, along with these challenges comes the task of learning to co-exist with non-farming neighbors (and vice-versa!). Being a good neighbor becomes even more crucial in higher density areas where there is little buffer between you and your neighbor, which can sometimes lead to your struggles becoming that of your neighbors' as well.

KNOW YOUR LOCAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

Every community has different rules when it comes to what you can and can't do with your property. It helps to be familiar with the land use regulations specific to your city or town since they often differ from one community to another. Know what permits you need and be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations that apply to you.

These may include:

- minimum property line setbacks
- nuisance (noise/odor/dust) ordinances
- fencing requirements/restrictions
- minimum required area for specific animals
- animal-specific rules such as a limit on roosters



WATER QUALITY BENEFIT

Adhering to good hobby farm practices not only make your activities more conducive to happy neighbors but the protection you provide to nearby surface waters will benefit your entire community as a valued resource.



HOBBY FARM LAYOUT

Choosing a hobby farm layout can have an immediate impact on neighbor relationships. Hobby farmers should be mindful of the sounds and smells that will be generated from hobby farming activities and how they may be offensive to non-farming neighbors. The relationship between a hobby farmer and neighbor can often lead to conflicts when a layout does not take into consideration potential impacts to neighbors.

Precautions to locate activities away from neighboring properties and to provide visual, odor and noise barriers can help to avoid possible complaints.

- Choose the right fencing to prevent animals from entering neighboring properties.
- Provide adequate screening to protect neighbor privacy.
- Consider a vegetated buffer or windbreak to help prevent the drift of odor, dust and noise from your property to your neighbors.
- Locate compost and manure piles downwind and as far as possible from neighboring houses and yards, keeping in mind surface water resources and storm drain locations.

COMMUNICATING CAN BE KEY TO COEXISTING

The best way to communicate with a neighbor is to get out and meet them. Meeting your neighbor is a great way to gage their point of view when it comes to your hobby farm plans and activities. A farmer's communication skills may be as important as minimizing odors, noise or pests to maintain a good relationship with your neighbor.

Know your neighbor

- Be neighborly and a good listener.
- People are often more open to individual discussion and will become an ally once a personal connection is made.
- Resolve conflicts through compromise and by adjusting farming practices that are the source of the problem.
- Neighbors are a great resource for information. Discussions may lead to information that could be helpful in managing your hobby farm.
- Invite neighbors over to show them the farm, talk about your activities and how you have taken actions to mitigate potential nuisances caused by your hobby farm.
- Invite neighbors over to observe or participate in the harvest or other milestones.

Most hobby farmers are very good at raising animals and growing food. You may find that you end up with excess food during the year. Bringing your neighbor fresh eggs and vegetables or hosting a neighborhood barbecue is a great way to show your appreciation for being a good neighbor and build positive relationships.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

The appearance of your hobby farm plays a big role when developing neighbor relationships and can be a direct reflection on you and your willingness to be considerate of your non-farming surroundings. Hobby farming is a commitment that requires a lot of time. Make sure you can handle the daily and weekly schedule required to complete your farming activities and maintenance so your property won't become a neighborhood eyesore. Investing time to maintain an eye-pleasing farm will help gain the support of your neighbors.