Checklist: Regulations for On-Farm Public Spaces

This checklist, developed by the Michigan Agritourism Association, is designed to help you quickly identify regulatory requirements for various public spaces on your farm.

To determine the requirements, please refer to the following table. Ask yourself the questions in each category and reach out to the regulatory authority to determine the steps you need to take to be in compliance.

RETAIL AREAS	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Zoning / permitted use	*Do local zoning regulations allow for this type of land use?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.*
Building code / occupancy classification	*Do you have a building permit for Group M (Mercantile) occupancy?*	*Any structure built for retail trade falls under Group M and requires a building permit.* *Review Module 61: Michigan's Building Construction Code. ADD LINK.*
Electrical requirements / inspection	*Has the market passed an electrical inspection and have you received a permit?*	*Seasonal stands under 400 square feet do not require electric power. Permanent retail markets must meet the Michigan Electric Code (MEC and plumbing code requirements.* *Contact your local municipality's electrical inspector.*
Emergency exits and signage	*Are there emergency exits and clear signage for these exits?*	*Schedule an inspection with your local fire marshal.*
Fire extinguishers / fire suppression where required	*Do you have fire extinguishers and fire suppression systems?*	*Schedule an inspection with your local fire marshal. Note: fire suppression systems require an annual certification.*

RETAIL AREAS, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Fire code and required inspections	*Has a fire safety inspection been completed?*	*Schedule an inspection with your local fire marshal.*
ADA/accessibility	*Are the entrances, aisles, pathways, checkout / service counter and parking lot areas accessible?*	*Retail markets are considered places of public accommodation. Please visit https://www.ada.gov/topics/title-iii for specific requirements.* *Also, a helpful article: https://extension.psu.edu/creating-an-inclusive-agritourism-experience*
Heating/cooling/ventilation requirements	*Does the building have sufficient heating, cooling, and ventilation?*	*Contact your local municipality or county building department to determine what's required.*
Signage requirements	*Do you have necessary permits for highway signage?*	*Sign permits are issued by cities, villages and charter townships. Check with your local municipality.* *MDOT regulates signage along highways and state rights of way.*
Food sales and safety regulations	*Are you in compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act, food establishment licenses, food handling requirements, health department inspections and product specific regulations?*	*Please see Module 41: Farm Market GAAMPs and Other Regulations for the specific requirements for compliance. (ADD LINK)*

RETAIL AREAS, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Alcohol sales, If applicable	*Do you have a liquor license/permit? Have you met local requirements for alcohol sales?*	*Apply for a permit through the Michigan Liquor Control Commission.* *Also, be sure to check with your local township regarding other regulations which may be required for alcohol sales and consumption on the farm.*
PARKING	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Zoning requirements	*Does your parking area comply with local zoning regulations?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.*
Required setbacks	*Does your parking lot meet required setbacks from the property line or road?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.*
Surface material /grade requirements	*Does the parking area meet the surface/grade requirements as noted in the Farm Market GAAMPs?*	*Review the Farm Market GAAMPs and your local zoning ordinance.*
Drainage/stormwater considerations	*Have you addressed drainage/stormwater concerns in the parking area?*	*Contact your local municipality or drain commissioner.*
Required number of parking spaces	*Do you have the adequate number of parking spaces for your guests?*	*There is no statewide mandate but review your local zoning ordinance to see if there are any specific requirements.*

PARKING, cont.	Questions	Next steps
ADA/accessibility	*Do you have ADA accessible parking spaces? Van-accessible spaces?* *Is there an accessible route from parking to public entrance?*	***Consult an accessibility/ADA professional or local building official*** *when designing or modifying facilities. Public accommodations must provide reasonable accessibility and accommodations under applicable federal and Michigan law.* *Visit https://www.ada.gov for information.*
Fire lane / emergency vehicle access	*Do you have a fire lane where a fire truck can park and reach the market in the event of an emergency?*	*Meet with local fire department official.*
Parking for buses/large groups, if applicable	*If you have large groups coming onto the farm, is there room for them to park?*	*There is no statewide mandate on how much parking space is required for large groups. Review your local zoning ordinance to see if there are any specific requirements.*
Signage and traffic flow	*Do you have clear signage directing traffic where to park, where to enter and exit?*	*While not mandated, on high traffic days, you will need this.*
Overflow traffic	*Do you have a plan for where cars park when the parking area is full? At what point do you need to close the farm due to being over capacity?*	*While it may seem like a good problem to have, once it happens to you and you are unprepared, it is a very difficult problem. Make a plan for this.*

PARKING, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Lighting	*Does the parking lot have sufficient lighting for the various times of day that it will be used?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.*
EVENT SPACES – INSIDE and OUTSIDE	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Zoning / special-event requirements	*Do local zoning regulations allow for this type of land use?* *Do you have a special land use permit, if required?* *Are you in compliance with all other local zoning requirements pertaining to events?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.* *Read Module 35: Municipal Planning and Zoning Regulations (ADD LINK) to understand the zoning process and why you may need a special land use permit.*
Occupancy/load limits	*Are you in compliance with occupancy limits for indoor spaces and/or outdoor event areas?*	*Meet with local fire department official.*
Building / fire inspection	*Has a building and event space been inspected and approved by the local fire department?*	*Meet with local fire department official.*
Tent permits and fire requirements	*Do you have the required permits for the use of tents during your events? Has the tent been inspected by the local fire department?*	*Review local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.* *Also meet with local fire department official.*

EVENT SPACES – INSIDE and OUTSIDE, cont.	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Emergency exits/egress	*Do you have emergency exits and safe, unobstructed paths (egress) to safety.*	*Meet with local fire department official.*
Fire lanes and emergency vehicle access	*Do you have a fire lane where a fire truck can park and reach the event area in the event of an emergency?*	*Meet with local fire department official.*
Temporary structures /stages	*Do you have permits for temporary event structures, such as stages, etc.?*	*Review local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator*
Restroom requirements	*Do you have the required number and type of restrooms for the number of expected guests?*	*Check with local health department and local zoning administrator. Local code may dictate the number of toilets per estimated peak visitor capacity.*
ADA/accessibility	*Is the event area ADA accessible for guests with disabilities?*	***Consult an accessibility/ADA professional or local building official*** *when designing or modifying facilities. Public accommodations must provide reasonable accessibility and accommodations under applicable federal and Michigan law.* *Visit https://www.ada.gov for information on making your event accessible.*

EVENT SPACES – INSIDE and OUTSIDE, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Alcohol licensing/permits	*Do you have a liquor license/permit? Have you met local requirements for alcohol sales?*	*You can apply for a permit through the Michigan Liquor Control Commission.* *Also, be sure to check with your local township regarding other regulations which may be required for your specific event.*
Parking / traffic management	*Do you have a traffic management plan for guest parking, traffic flow as guests leave the event?*	*Develop a traffic management plan, but review your special use permit, as local zoning officials often regulate parking/traffic flow within the permit.* *Local road commissions regulate driveways that connect with the public right of way.* *Local police can sometimes provide traffic control on public roads during events.*
Noise/lighting restrictions	*Are you in compliance with local noise and lighting restrictions during your events?*	*Review local zoning ordinance and your special use permit. Meet with your zoning administrator if you need clarification on what's allowed.*
Event insurance requirements	*Does your insurance policy cover events? If not, be sure to obtain coverage prior to hosting events.*	*Read Module 10: Insurance and Liability. ADD LINK.* *Meet with your insurance agent.*
Security / first aid / emergency plan requirements	*Do you have an Emergency Plan, including security, first aid response, severe weather event and/or active shooter plans?*	*Read Module 65: Risk Management and Safety. ADD LINK*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS	Questions	Next steps
Public access vs. restricted animal areas	*What activities are you allowing the public to do with animals? Petting is different from feeding, entering pens, holding animals, bottle feeding, pony rides, etc.* *Be aware that each different type of interaction can create a different risk/regulatory/ insurance question.* *If the public has access to the animals, you need to take even more precautions for the safety of your animals and your guests.*	*Contact your local health department to discuss the types of animal/public interactions you plan to offer and any public heath requirements.* *Work with your veterinarian to establish which animals are appropriate for public interaction and under what conditions.* *Meet with your insurance agent to determine the type of insurance you need and other risk management strategies, and that your insurance policy cover the specific activities.*
Fencing / barriers and gate requirements	*Do you have the requirements fencing/barriers and gates to ensure the safety of your animals and guests?*	***Review animal areas for secure fencing**, gates and barriers that protect both people and animals.* ***Contact your local building/zoning official** if you are constructing or significantly modifying fencing, gates, structures or public areas.* ***Consult your veterinarian** about species-specific containment and animal welfare needs.*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Signage	*Do you have clear, visible signage that lists the rules for guest to follow when interacting with your animals, as well as signage noting areas that are "off limits" to the public?*	*Develop clear signs for animal-contact rules, handwashing, feeding restrictions, age restrictions and "staff only/off limits" areas.* ***Contact your local health department** for public-health guidance on animal-contact signage. MDARD also provides animal-exhibit handwashing signs that can be used as a resource. (Michigan)*
Handwashing stations	*Do you have handwashing stations located near the animal petting areas?*	***Contact your local health department** for guidance on appropriate placement and setup.* *Provide accessible handwashing with running water and soap near animal-contact areas.* *Michigan's animal exhibition requirements specifically address access to hand-cleansing facilities near buildings housing animals. (Michigan)*
ADA / Accessible pathways and viewing areas	*Are the pathways to the animals' areas, as well as the animals viewing areas assessable for guests with disabilities?*	*Review pathways, gates, viewing areas and animal-contact areas for accessibility.* ***Consult an accessibility/ADA professional or local building official** when designing or modifying facilities. Public accommodations must provide reasonable accessibility and accommodations under applicable federal and Michigan law. (Michigan)*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS, cont.	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Animal-to-public separation	*Are the animals kept safely from the public?* *Are animals' areas separate from public dining and play areas?*	*Establish appropriate separation between animals and visitors based on species and activity.* ***Consult your veterinarian** regarding safe animal/public interaction.* ***Contact your local health department** for zoonotic-disease and public-health concerns.* *Keep animal areas separated from food-service/dining areas as required by applicable food-safety rules. (Michigan)*
Staff Supervision	*Do you have sufficient staff to supervise animal petting areas to ensure the safety of your animals and guests?*	*Determine staffing levels based on the number of visitors, animals, activities and layout. Create written supervision expectations and assign staff to monitor animal-contact areas.* ***Contact your insurance agent** for recommendations regarding supervision and risk management.*
Animal handling protocols	*Do you have clear protocols for public interaction with your animals? Do you have staff present to ensure protocols are followed?*	*Establish written protocols for petting, feeding, holding, bottle feeding, entering pens, pony rides and other interactions.* ***Work with your veterinarian and maintain a VCPR (Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship)** so animal health and appropriate public-contact practices can be addressed.* *Contact your local health department for zoonotic-disease/public-health questions.*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS, cont.	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Emergency procedures	*Do you have a clear plan for emergencies, such as an animal bite? Have you trained your staff, so they know the proper procedures?*	*Create written procedures for bites, scratches, kicks, falls, allergic reactions and other injuries.* ***Contact your local health department*** *for guidance regarding animal bites and potential disease exposure. For a bite/exposure, follow your local health department's reporting and evaluation procedures; Michigan directs animal-bite reporting to the local health department. (Michigan)* ***Call 911 for a medical emergency.***
Animal escape / incident procedures	*Do you have a plan for animals that get out of their pen or escape? Have you trained your staff, so they know what to do?*	*Develop an animal-escape plan that includes securing the public, containing the animal and notifying appropriate staff.* ***Work with your veterinarian*** *on animal-specific emergency procedures.* *For reportable animal diseases or animal-health concerns, contact* ***MDARD Animal Industry Division*** *at 800-292-3939. (Michigan)*
Insurance requirements for public animal interaction	*Do you have an insurance policy that covers public animal interaction?*	***Contact your insurance agent before opening the area or adding a new activity.*** *Specifically identify all activities - petting, feeding, entering pens, holding, bottle feeding, pony rides, etc. - and confirm that each is covered. Ask about recommended risk-management practices and documentation.*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS, cont.	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Requirements for children entering animal pens	*Do you have a clear policy for children entering animal pens?*	*If children are allowed in animal pens, they should be supervised at all times by staff member. Family members are not a sufficient substitute for a trained staff member.* *Establish an age, supervision and staff-to-child policy for any animal area that visitors can enter.* ***Contact your local* health department and insurance agent** before allowing *children into animal pens. If children are allowed into pens, establish trained staff supervision and clear rules for animal interaction.*
Slip /fall and surface requirements	*Is your walkway made of a slip-resistant material?*	*Inspect surfaces regularly for mud, manure, water, uneven ground and other hazards. Use slip-resistant surfaces where appropriate and establish a cleaning/inspection schedule.* ***Contact your local building official** when constructing or substantially modifying public walkways or floors.*
Emergency access for EMS / fire	*Do you have a fire lane where a fire truck can park and reach the animal areas quickly in the event of an emergency?*	***Contact your local fire department/fire marshal** to review emergency vehicle access, fire lanes, gates and access to animal areas.* ***Contact the local building official** if new structures or access routes are being constructed. Maintain clear access for EMS and fire response.*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Cleaning/sanitation procedures	*Do you have proper cleaning/sanitation procedures for animals' pens and areas that the public touches?*	*Develop written cleaning and disinfection procedures for animal-contact surfaces, pens, gates, equipment and high-touch areas.* ***Consult your veterinarian** regarding animal-safe disinfectants and cleaning practices.* ***Contact your local health department** for public-health guidance. MDARD provides guidance on cleaning/disinfection and animal-associated waste for animal exhibitions. (Michigan)*
Required staff training / supervision	*Have you developed training manuals and procedures for all new staff? Do you have periodic refreshers for staff? Do you supervise your staff to ensure they are following policies?*	*Create written training procedures covering animal handling, handwashing, sanitation, emergency response, animal escapes, visitor safety and reporting. Provide initial and periodic refresher training. Keep documentation of training.* ***Ask your insurance agent** whether specific training or documentation is recommended or required by your policy.*
Capacity limits for enclosed animal areas	*Have you developed capacity limits for enclosed animal areas?*	*Establish occupancy/capacity limits based on the size and layout of the area, animal numbers, visitor flow and emergency access.* ***Contact your local fire marshal and building official** to determine whether an occupancy load or other capacity requirement applies. Post the capacity where appropriate.*

ANIMAL PETTING BARNS / ANIMAL AREAS, cont.	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Animal health / veterinary relationship	*Do you have an established relationship with a licensed veterinarian who regularly provides care for your animals?* *Do you have protocols for animal illness, injury, vaccination, isolation and determining when an animal should be removed from public contact?*	Establish a relationship with a Michigan-licensed veterinarian and maintain a VCPR. Work with your veterinarian to develop routine animal-health, vaccination, parasite-control, isolation and public-contact protocols. Contact MDARD regarding reportable animal diseases, animal movement requirements or other state animal-health questions. *MDARD identifies animal health, disease reporting and animal movement as areas it regulates and works with veterinarians and animal owners.*
PLAYGROUNDS	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Insurance carrier requirements	*Do you have insurance coverage that covers playgrounds?*	*Meet with your insurance agent.* ***Ask: "What must we do for this playground to be covered under our policy?"*** *This may be just as important as the regulatory requirements.* *Also read Module 10: Insurance and Liability. ADD LINK.*
Applicable playground safety standards, including materials, protective surfacing, fencing, location, spacing, signage, capacity use restrictions, maintenance, etc.	*Does your playground comply with the 2025 Edition of the Consumer Product Safety Commissions Handbook on Public Playground Safety?* *Can you document compliance?*	*Read the 2025 Consumer Product Safety Commissions Handbook on Public Playground Safety.* *Schedule an inspection by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). A list of CPSI's in Michigan can be found on the MDARD website.*

PLAYGROUNDS, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Risk Management Protocols	*Do you have Risk Management Protocols in place?*	*Read Module 65: Risk Management and Safety for tips for reducing your risk. ADD LINK.*
RESTROOMS	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Required number of restrooms based on occupancy	*Do you have the sufficient number of restrooms for your guests?*	*Contact your local municipal building department. The number is calculated based on using your building's occupancy classification (such as mercantile or assembly) and square footage.*
Permanent vs. portable restroom requirements	*Do you need permanent or portable restrooms? What are the requirements for my farm?*	*Review the local zoning ordinance to determine restrooms requirements.*
ADA-accessible restroom requirements	*Are your restrooms ADA-accessible for visitors with disabilities?*	*Visit https://www.ada.gov for information on making your restrooms accessible.*
Accessible route to restrooms	*Is the pathway to the restrooms for guests with disabilities?*	*Visit https://www.ada.gov for information on ensuring paths to restrooms are accessible.*
Handwashing facilities	*Do you have a handwashing station within or near restrooms? Does it have potable tested water?*	*Contact your local health department for water tests.*
Plumbing/sewer requirements	*Have plumbing/sewer requirements been met?*	*Contact your local municipality.*
Ventilation	*Are restrooms properly ventilated?*	*Contact your local municipality.*

RESTROOMS, cont.	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Cleaning/maintenance	*Are restrooms cleaned and maintained on a regular basis? Is staff trained to follow proper cleaning protocols?*	*Contact your local health department.*
Location relative to public areas	*Are restrooms located close to public areas?*	*Contact your local municipality.*
Portable restroom placement/accessibility	*Are portable restrooms placed in a location per local guidelines? Are they accessible for visitors with disabilities? Are they available for U-Pick customers?*	*Contact your local municipality and MDARD Produce safety inspectors.*
Requirements for special events	*Are additional requirements during special events?*	*Contact your local municipality.*
FOOD / BEVERAGE STATIONS	**Questions**	**Next steps**
Food / Beverage Sales Regulations	*Are you in compliance with food and beverage SALES regulations?*	*If you are selling food and beverage on the farm, there are specific food safety regulations you need to be aware of and follow.* *Please see Module 41: Farm Market GAAMPs and Other Regulations for detailed information on those requirements.* *Also see **MDARD's Food Establishment Licensing Details, FAQ and Step-by-Step Guide** for information about licenses you may need. Or contact MDARD at 800-292-3939.*

FOOD / BEVERAGE STATIONS, cont.	Questions	Next steps
Accessible seating/service areas	*Do you have seating and services areas for guests with disabilities?*	*Visit https://www.ada.gov for information on making your restrooms accessible.*
GENERAL SITE / PUBLIC SPACE REQUIREMENTS	**Questions**	**Next steps**
General ADA accessibility	*Are your public spaces in compliance with ADA requirements?*	*Visit https://www.ada.gov for information on making your public spaces accessible.*
Emergency access/fire lanes	*Are there fire lanes for emergency vehicles to easily access your property and public spaces?*	*Meet with local fire department official.*
Site lighting	*Do you have sufficient lighting in your public spaces?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.*
Signage	*Do you have sufficient signage in public spaces on the farm? Does your signage meet local ordinances?*	*Sign permits are issued by cities, villages and charter townships. Check with your local municipality.*
Pedestrian pathways	*Are pedestrian pathways safe for visitors and do they meet ADA requirements?*	*Check with your local municipality and visit https://www.ada.gov for information*
Trip/fall hazards	*Have you addressed any trip hazards in the public spaces on your farm?*	*Meet with your insurance agent and schedule a walk-through of your farm and follow their recommendations.*

GENERAL SITE / PUBLIC SPACE REQUIREMENTS	Questions	Next steps
Guardrails/handrails	*Do you have guardrails and handrails where needed?*	*Meet with your insurance agent and schedule a walk-through of your farm and follow their recommendations.*
Stairs/ramps	*Are any stairs or ramps safe for your visitors?*	*Meet with your insurance agent and schedule a walk-through of your farm and follow their recommendations.*
Electrical/outdoor electrical	*Has an electrical inspection been done of your public spaces?*	*Contact your local municipality's electrical inspector.*
Generators	*Have generators been approved for use in specific areas on your farm?*	*Contact your local municipality's electrical inspector.*
Temporary structures	*Do you have permits for temporary structures on the farm?*	*Review your local zoning ordinance and meet with zoning administrator.*
Stormwater/drainage	*How do you handle stormwater and drainage?*	*Contact your local drain commissioner.*
Snow/ice management	*Do you have a plan for managing snow and ice in areas where the public will be on your farm?*	*Make a plan to provide clear access for emergency vehicles and public rights of way. Talk with your insurance agent on best practices to prevent snow/ice related injuries.*
Trash/recycling areas	*Do you have a plan for trash and recycling in public areas on the farm?*	*Contact your local municipality regarding any specific rules and also review the Michigan Waste Regulations.*
Fencing and gates	*Are you putting up new fencing or modifying fencing in public area?*	*Contact your local building/zoning official if you are constructing or significantly modifying fencing, gates, structures or public areas.*

GENERAL SITE / PUBLIC SPACE REQUIREMENTS	Questions	Next steps
Security	*Do you have security concerns on the farm?*	*Talk with your insurance agent to determine if there are specific security measures that are recommended or required, such as security cameras, etc.*
First aid/AED locations	*Do you have a specific area where you can handle first aid on the farm?*	
Incident documentation	*Do you have protocols in place for documenting any incidents or accidents on the farm?*	*Meet with your insurance agent for recommendations and requirements. Also, see Module 65: Risk Management and Safety. ADD Link*
Insurance requirements	*Do you have sufficient insurance for the buildings, public spaces and activities on your farm?*	*Meet with your insurance agent to determine the type of insurance you need and other risk management strategies, and that your insurance policy cover the specific activities.*
Required inspections and inspection records	*Are there required inspections for your public spaces on the farm?*	*Meet with your insurance agent.*

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