

County farm tour brings agricultural awareness to local residents

AT A GLANCE

The Bonner County Farm Tour promotes agricultural education and awareness with county residents that may not be aware of the local agricultural operations.

The Situation

Bonner County has a rich heritage of agriculture that started back when there were stump farms. Trees were cleared to create farmable ground in the late 1800's. Today the county still has a rich agricultural production, although it has changed over the years. As the population and landscape have changed over the years, farms in the county have also changed.

In 2022 the USDA Agriculture Census recorded 97,446 acres as farmland with 798 total farms. This is a change compared to 1992 when there were 150,021 acres in farmland and 476 total farms. The land that is farmed has decreased, but we see a growing number of small acreage farms. In 1992 there were 57 farms sized 1-9 acres while there were 128 farms of the same size in 2024.

The overall population of the county has also changed. The population has doubled since 1990. Over the years Bonner County has seen a few influx periods of population growth from migration. Based on interactions with the University of Idaho Extension office, there seems to be an increase in both residents that are not farming and those that are either beginning farmers or homesteaders in the county.



Farm tour participants learn about a small cattle ranch in the northern part of Bonner County.

With changes in agriculture and population in the county, the farm tour aims to promote agricultural education and awareness with all county residents that may not be aware of the agricultural operations in the county. These objectives were measured by the number of participants on the tour and the responses to the end of tour survey.

Our Response

Each year, the farm tour planning committee meets to determine which section of the county to visit, and which stops to highlight. The committee is made up of Bonner County Agriculture and Forestry Committee members, Extension staff and other groups such as the Bonner and Boundary Cattle Association and the Bonner County Soil and Water Conservation District. The

tour switches to a different area of the county each year. The tour tries to highlight the diversity in agriculture in the county by including a livestock ranch, a crop or horticulture farm and a forestry site. The 2025 farm tour included a blueberry farm, a cattle ranch, an essentials oil research farm and a produce farm.

We advertise through the local ag cooperative store newsletter as well as through flyers, social media posts and direct emails.

Participants begin the farm tour with refreshments and a bag of informational material from local farms and tour sponsors. The participants ride a school bus to each of the four agricultural operations highlighted. The tour also includes a lunch that includes locally raised meat and handmade pies.

This is a long-standing event for Bonner County. The 2025 farm tour marked the 56th time it was offered. In 2025 we had 61 participants on the tour. Thirteen of the participants attended six or more farm tours with one participant attending 26 or more farm tours.

Program Outcomes

All 43 survey respondents indicated that the farm tour increased their awareness of agriculture enterprises in Bonner County. The responses from the survey also indicated that many participants either came away with knowledge or skills that they could utilize themselves or came away with a better appreciation for the agriculture in the county.

Participants were asked in the survey “How will what you learned today have an impact on your life?” Of those that learned useful skills, responses included:

- How to improve my gardening
- How to prune blueberries

- Ideas I can apply for my own use
- I have a number of new ideas of how I can implement new practices that will help me out
- Good ideas for planting and harvesting

For the participants specifically learning an appreciation for agriculture in the county, response included:

- Appreciation of all the local produce
- Looking forward to buying more produce at farmer’s market
- Appreciation for the food I eat
- Encourage local farms
- I will make a bigger effort to buy more fresh vegetables and fruits
- How hard farmers work to provide us food
- Being able to shop local
- Buy local to support local economy and have better products

The Future

This tour will most likely continue to be offered for many years to come. Because there are several repeat participants, future surveys may ask about implementation of new ideas learned in previous farm tours.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The Bonner County Farm Tour is put on by the Bonner County Agriculture and Forestry Committee and UI Extension, Bonner County. Sponsors include Inland Forest Management, Gem Berry Products, Idaho Beef Council, Co-Op Country Store, Bonner County Farm Bureau, and Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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50-25-jjensen-farm-tour • 10/25