

*Inside: Making Fun of "Citiots"
A Traditional Country Pastime*

Practical Tips for Living in a...

Country Community

Rural Culture - Rural Roads - Rural Resources

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long. — You come too.

Robert Frost, from "The Pasture"

Welcome to your new rural community. Living in the country has much to offer - a peaceful, healthy lifestyle; the opportunity to grow a garden, raise animals, ride horses, or watch birds and wildlife; and a friendly community, with involved citizens. But this way of living is at risk.

Rural communities across the country are endangered by urban sprawl, and poorly planned development. State policies often focus on more densely populated areas, where more voters live. Insuring that our area retains its rural character takes conscious effort, political activism, and plain old hard work. We can't sit back and hope someone else will do it.

You can help preserve this way of life. Learn about the issues in your area, and ask how you can help. Join with your neighbors to build a riding trail. Landscape with plants that provide food for birds. Bring up your kids to respect their neighbors, the law, and private property. Participate in the land planning process in your county, parish, or township to stay on top of issues that could affect your neighborhood. Educate others about the importance of preserving farmland, grazing lands, and rural communities.

Read the information in this brochure, and explore the resources listed at the end. Together we can keep our little corner of the country a pleasant, safe, and thriving place to live for generations to come.



The Story of Many Rural Communities:

"Dirt roads are too dusty - they should be paved."

"We need curbs and sidewalks here."

"It's too dark here - there should be streetlights."

"Those old cars and tractors should be cleaned up."

"Did you hear Jane was hit by a speeding car?"

"We need to be on city water, and put sewers in."

"People shouldn't keep livestock or chickens here."

"I hear the old Jones place was sold to developers."

"Let's raise taxes to pay for these improvements."

"The new mall should be opening soon."

"Kids used to be able to ride their horses all over."

"You used to be able to see all the stars out here."

"This used to be a nice place to live."





How To Make Fun of "Citiots"

You Too Can Enjoy this Time-Honored Tradition

Citiot - A urban or suburban person, in a rural area, who fails to respect local culture or standards of behavior. Derivation: city + idiot. Opposite of bumpkin.

Complaining about citiots is a popular pastime in the rural areas. Not everyone who comes from the city is a citiot - most folks move to the country because they love it, and are eager to get some dirt under their fingernails, start a garden, own horses, or just enjoy the land and lifestyle.

Citiots are those people who try to turn their new rural area into the city they left behind. Citiots complain about cows mooing and roosters crowing. They whine about smells from neighboring farms. They tell their neighbors to mow their lawn (pasture) because it doesn't look tidy. They try to change others' way of life to suit their city values - sometimes through legislation or rezoning. Why did they move here if they didn't want to live here? And would they please move away?

It's not hard to make fun of citiots. Your rural neighbors will certainly have stories for you, and you'll soon have tales of your own to share. They start with "Did you hear what they did now?" or "You'll never believe this one..."

See *Things Citiots Do* on the back page of this handout for a list of citiot behaviors to get you started on tales of citiocy in your neighborhood!

Things That Will Endear You to Your New Community:

Smile and wave when you see your neighbors.

Say "I love hearing your roosters crow every morning!"

Say "May our kids pet your horse?"

Say "I would love to have some of your horse manure for my roses."

Considerate Driving Safety & Courtesy on Rural Roads

Car commercials love to show shiny sedans, speeding around curves on country roads, or 4x4 trucks tearing up trails and streambeds. These are *not* good practices, which is why they say "Professional driver on closed course".

So how *should* one drive on rural roads?

Take blind curves, or the crests of hills, slowly enough that you could safely stop if you were to come upon an animal, child, or stopped vehicle in the road ahead of you.

"Open Range" signs mean cattle may be on the road. Hitting a steer can be fatal - to you! Large animals, because of their high centers of gravity, often go through the windshield in a crash, killing the occupants of the vehicle.

When you pass people riding, leading, or herding animals, *slow way down*. Look to the people to give you instructions. They may ask you to wait, or they may wave you on by.

Animals frighten easily. Go past slowly, and don't do anything sudden. Do not honk or gun the engine. Give them a wide berth, and be alert in case they startle and run into your path.

Intentionally spooking an animal is often a criminal offense. If the handler, or animal, were injured you could be held criminally and financially responsible.

Some Things Citiots Seem to Think:

"There are no rules out in the country."

"Driving fast on these winding roads is fun!"

"Insects are pests, and should be killed."

"Wildlife is dangerous, and carries diseases."

"Everyone will love our decorative outdoor lights."

"I have a well, so I can use all the water I want to."

"Get your horse off the road. Roads are for cars."

In most parts of the United States it is legal to ride, lead, or herd animals on roads. Livestock has the right-of-way.

Slow-moving farm equipment may use the local roads. Be patient, and pass with care.

Drivers hauling horses or other livestock in trailers must take turns and bumps very slowly for the safety of the animals inside. Do not follow closely behind livestock trailers.

Driving too fast on dirt roads kicks up dust, and damages the road surface. Drive slowly on dirt roads and try not to leave a cloud in your wake.

Many people use ATVs for transportation and doing chores. Be on the lookout for them.

Do not race ATVs or dirt bikes around the roads for fun - it disturbs neighbors with the dust and noise. Never ride on others' property without their permission.

Drive slower when roads are wet. Paved roads can be very slippery. If it's cold enough, you could encounter "black ice". Unpaved road surfaces can be easily damaged when muddy.

Speed limits tell you the fastest you should travel on a given road. Drive more slowly if it is dark or foggy, if you are blinded by glare, or if there are animals or children nearby.

Be especially careful when passing. Take a little extra time and wait for a safe opportunity.

Practicing safe and considerate driving every day could save your life - or the lives of others.

A Quick Guide to Country Living

Country people on the whole are practical, generous, kind, good humored, knowledgeable, handy, and hard-working. If you ask for their help or advice you may find yourself learning more than you thought there was to know about geese, fence building, the weather patterns, what variety of tomato grows best here, local history, and so on. They can be a tremendous resource. Get to know your neighbors, and lend them a hand, too.

Privacy and Security

People who live far from their neighbors value their privacy, and can get nervous if they see a stranger coming up to the house uninvited. Call before dropping by or try to catch them when they are out working in the yard. Most folks enjoy a friendly chat, but chores *must* get done and daylight hours are precious, so be considerate of their time.

Farming and Gardening

Never trespass in fields or orchards. Theft is a costly problem for farmers. Never pick fruit from other's trees, even if they are unfenced and right along the road. Trespassing in croplands can also spread plant diseases.

Sneaking "just a few pieces" of fruit through agriculture checkpoints can have devastating affects on local agriculture if a pest from elsewhere is brought in. Always respect produce quarantines.

If one of your neighbors seems particularly talented at gardening, express an interest - they'd probably love to help you get started. Ask about what kinds of plants grow well, which varieties they favor, and best times to plant them.

Livestock

Lots of folks around here raise, train, and keep large animals. They have seen what can happen when people get careless. Stay out of pastures, and never approach, pet, or feed livestock without the owner's permission.

Call someone if you see livestock running loose - a neighbor, or the sheriff - you could be returning a pet home, or preventing a serious accident.

Dogs

Country dogs are usually well trained and obedient. In some areas dogs can run loose, but chasing livestock is never allowed. In most communities, a property owner is entirely within their rights to shoot a dog that is harassing their livestock. If a neighbor lets you know about your dog causing trouble, they are doing you a courtesy - thank them, and be sure to fix the problem.

Guns

Many people own guns - for hunting, for the protection of livestock, or for protecting one's family. If you are interested in shooting, get involved with a local range or gun club. Do not buy a gun and start practicing at home. Those bullets go far - often as far as the neighbor's property. Never allow children unsupervised access to guns.

Trespassing

Unfenced land is still private land. Always respect private property, including pastures, crop lands, open fields, wooded areas. Ask the owner's permission first if you want to use their property. Offering to pick up trash or mend a broken fence may make you a welcome return visitor.

Support your neighbors and keep tax money in your community - shop locally!



Things Citiots Do:

- Speed along local roads.
- Waste water.
- Pass animals or children along the road at full speed.
- Ride ATVs up and down the road, bothering everyone with noise and dust.
- Fence-off a trail or path that's been used for years by locals without exploring workable alternatives.
- Pave, plant, or otherwise block public road shoulders.
- Leave bright "security" lights on all night.
- Install "decorative" outdoor lighting.
- Set off fireworks around dry brush, or around livestock.
- Burn brush or trash in windy or dry weather.
- Smoke in or near barns.
- Feed or pet livestock without the owner's permission.
- Trespass, especially into pastures or fields.
- Cut fences or leave others' gates open.
- Hunt without permission, or where livestock live.
- Grow non-native, invasive plants that can spread, endangering nearby pastures and wild lands.
- Grow poisonous plants near shared fencelines.
- Complain about the neighbors' animals or property.

Outdoor Lighting

People who live away from the city appreciate dark nights. "Decorative" outdoor lighting is inconsiderate and wasteful. Nobody wants a light shining toward their home from a nearby property. Keep outdoor lights to a minimum, use only fully shielded fixtures, and turn them off when you are not using them.. Enjoy the crisp, star-filled skies and moonlight!

Trail Access and Rights-of-Way

Trails may pass across or near your property. These have often been used for generations, and may be a critical link to nearby open space or public lands. Before fencing or blocking any trail on your land, get in touch with local trail user groups to see what options may exist. Some municipalities, such as San Diego County, offer legal indemnification for dedicated trail easements. Keeping trails open will make you a local hero.

Getting Involved

There are many ways you can be an active part of the community. Attend local meetings and events. Go for walks and meet the neighbors. If you are a religious person join a local church or other place of worship. Volunteer in a local club or help with a parade or other event. Work with programs that preserve rural character, and keep your community rural.

Resources for Rural Living:

Your County Agricultural Extension Office will have good information on local soil conditions, weather, planting advice, and so on.

Excellent books on growing vegetables, raising animals, building sheds, and every other country skill: www.storeybooks.com

Good-neighbor lighting guidelines: www.darksky.org

Information and books on draft animals: www.ruralheritage.com

Farmland conservation information: www.farmlandinfo.org

A wealth of trails information: www.railtrails.org

Resources for preserving dirt roads: www.highlands.com/pdra/

Gardening books and information: www.organicgardening.com

Landscaping with native plants: www.epa.gov/greenacres/

Info on many breeds of livestock: www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/

Enjoying backyard astronomy: www.backyardastronomer.com

Noxious, invasive weed information: www.fs.fed.us/r9/weed/

This document was produced by Linda Eskin of Granite Hills Design, with the kind assistance of people on Equine-L, an online community of horsepeople who treasure their increasingly threatened rural lifestyles.

Copyright 2002 © Linda Eskin. May be distributed or reprinted only in its entirety, (all four pages), with this text included, at no charge to the recipient, as a public service. For any other use, or to order customized versions for your community or organization, or for a higher-resolution version for printing, contact rural@GraniteHillsDesign.com or visit www.GraniteHillsDesign.com

This copy has been made available by:

Welcome to the neighborhood!