



Five Tips to Launch Your Farm Blog

You can learn how to start a farm blog! We offer up five fun, basic tips to get you started.

By Lisa Kivirist

Tips for Generating Content

Once you start your blog, keep the content fresh by posting regularly.

Easy to say, but sometimes it's difficult to think creatively after a hard day of farm work.

Here are some thought-starters: Pick a random time of day—like 10:00 a.m.—and write a paragraph describing where you are on the farm and what you're doing.

Share a favorite recipe that has been in your family for generations. Describe the recipe's history and your memories of this dish.

Write a "top-10" list, adding a good dose of humor such as "Top 10 reasons raising chickens are easier than raising teenagers" or "Top 10 ways to rouse yourself out of bed for barn chores when the wind chill is 20 degrees F below zero."

Create a how-to photo essay by taking photos at various stages of a kitchen project such as canning tomatoes or baking bread.

Give a "tour" of your farm with both photos and words.

Write about the person who most influenced your decision to be a hobby farmer.

What advice would you give to someone considering starting a farm?

Ask a loyal customer to write a guest post on what they like about your farm.

What are the top three things hobby farming has taught you?

Interview a loyal customer in a question-and-answer format (Q&A interviews work well because you can typically do them via e-mail).

Share your favorite inspiring quotes.

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Online Resources Yvonne Brunot, Vermont farmer

Kriss Marion, Circle M Farm

Farm Blogs from Around the World

Free blog sites:

www.blogger.com

www.wordpress.com

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It's easy to feel overwhelmed when starting a farm blog when there's so many other things to do around the farm. Here are some basic tips to simplify the start-up process (don't miss all five steps):

1) Read Other Blogs

Before you start writing your own blog, take the time to peruse other blogs to determine what you like—and don't like—and start building a vision for your own venture.

Why should you blog? Click here to find out >>

Ian Walthew, an English writer based in rural France and author of "A Place in My Country: In Search of a Rural Dream,"



keeps a growing list of farm blogs entitled “Farm Blogs from Around the World,” providing excellent blog research fodder.

Read other postings with an objective eye. From a design perspective, what colors and layouts do you find appealing? Which blogs do you find easy to navigate and understand versus cluttered and confusing? What writing style engages you?

In many ways, reading a farm blog should make you feel like you’re transported to that place, warmly welcomed around the kitchen table and listening to friendly farm owners tell their story.

2) Find a Blog Buddy

With so many folks blogging today, it’s easy to find a friend to walk you through the first start-up steps on one of the free sites such as Blogger.

While sites like Blogger and Wordpress generally are easy to maneuver, the process seems less intimidating when a seasoned mentor is at your side.

As this start-up process is the same regardless of blog topic, this friend doesn’t need to have any connection to farm life, just blogging experience.

If you don’t have a friend who is a blogger, consider tapping into a local teenager’s expertise.

Teens today, part of the “millennial generation,” grew up so entrenched in Web technology that they can be your seasoned mentor.

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3) Set a Writing Routine

Blogs and gardens have a lot in common: Lots of energy and enthusiasm during the start-up phase (remember your excitement in sowing those first seeds of the season?), but harder to keep motivated to keep up with the weeds, harvest and post-harvest bed preparation.

Just like you need to keep weeding the garden on an on-going basis, blogs need regular upkeep and new postings to keep them fresh.

But posting to your blog can be much more fun, and creatively stimulating, than squashing potato bugs in August heat (don’t miss Steps 4 and 5). Think of yourself as an artist documenting life on your farm—sense and capture the beauty of your rural life and livelihood.

Get into the habit of posting regularly to your site with a goal of one post a day, week or month—whatever makes the most sense to you. While many seasoned bloggers post multiple times a day, that commitment simply isn’t doable for most hobby farmers.

Set your own realistic expectations, but stick to a regular routine to keep both you and your readers engaged.

Try to balance frequency of output with quality of content.

Sure, you’ll only want to post writing efforts that you feel good about, but try not to dwell too long on meticulously and slowly crafting each word.

The blogosphere and search engines like Google thrive on a continual stream of fresh content. Work on pumping out blogs quickly, realizing that even after you post a blog, you can change or edit it anytime.

Some tips: Keep postings short and engaging, leaving readers with a nugget of advice or thought to chew on.

Pay particular attention to your headline and first paragraph as these are the words search engines will notice.

Remember the basic essay-writing advice your high-school English teacher bestowed upon you: catchy introduction, three basic points and close, re-stressing the most important points.

4) Harvest Ideas Everywhere



Beware: Once you start blogging, ideas for posts will pop up everywhere.

You'll see the first zucchini blossom, cuddle a baby chick or try a new tomato recipe and think, "this would make a great blog post."

Write down those ideas immediately and remember that blog posts don't need to be long or complex essays. A key thought alongside an engaging photo can go a long way.

A "tip format" for blogs works well and helps readily organize your posts; two examples are "Five ways to savor tomato abundance" or "Three reasons why spring has officially sprung."

Look beyond your farm's property lines for posting ideas. Outside perspectives keep our farm story fresh and engaging. Did you eat at a great restaurant while traveling that featured local food? Write a post and link back to that establishment's Web page. Is there a new cookbook you recommend? Write a book review. Attend an inspiring farming conference? Write about the three key things you learned.

Remember humor and transparency go a long way in creating engaging posts.

Daily farm occurrences, especially those that give a realistic portrayal of rural life, give your readers an authentic, honest perspective of your business.

Don't hide the fact that the goat escaped from the pen again and it took all morning to get her chained back up. Create a post that evening narrating your experiences with honesty and candor.

Photos add another artistic layer of authenticity to your farm blog.

While many bloggers need to search through free photo sites for visuals to illustrate their entries, all you need is a digital camera and your farm will provide the real-life visuals.

Make it a habit to regularly snap pictures of routine farm happenings such as planting seeds or a bountiful wheelbarrow full of fresh produce.

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5) Keep Connected

Blogs promote interaction and online dialogue. Encourage your readers to post comments and, likewise, take the time to reply.

Your farm blog presents you with the opportunity to connect your story to the world—literally.

No longer isolated geographically, hobby farmers that would never have crossed paths physically can now evolve to kindred spirits online, sharing experiences, advice and inspiration.

Continue to reach out to other rural farm blogs, commenting on their posts, offering your perspective and asking questions. If you have some favorite blogs you read, you can add them to your "blog roll," a list of favorite links that appears on your blog.

While you may be starting your farm blog as a solo venture, realize that collectively you're part of a bigger picture: An online movement promoting the voice and story of hobby farmers nationwide.

By articulating your passion for rural living online for a potentially wide audience, together we can increase awareness and support for small-farm enterprises and sustainable agriculture and continue to fuel the rural renaissance.

Why should you blog? [Click here to find out>>](#)

About the Author: Lisa Kivirist is the co-author of *ECOpreneuring and Rural Renaissance* and is a W. K. Kellogg Food and Society Policy Fellow. She blogs weekly on food and agriculture issues for *Green Options*.

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