

FIELD TRIPS

FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES

written by Rex Baker and Paul Gorenzel (1992)
revised by Bob Timm and Craig Coolahan (2004)
Paul Gorenzel (2010)

Purpose: The all-day tour of the area will allow participants to see some of the vertebrate damage and control activities in the region, including overviews by local experts involved in these programs. The trip also facilitates informal interaction among participants.

Group Size: We typically fill two tour coaches (capacity 42 to 48 persons each), and in some years we have needed to add a passenger van following the buses to allow for late reservations and/or overbooking.

Planning Outline

I. Locate sites

A. Sources.

1. Farm advisors
2. Agricultural Commissioner's staff
3. USDA Wildlife Services field personnel
3. Public health and/or CDFA personnel
4. VP Council members
5. Product suppliers or distributors
6. Local wildlife control operators or PCOs.

B. Alternate stops in case of rain or other problems.

C. Evaluate whether site has adequate room for parking buses off-road and safe egress of passengers. Roads typically must be paved; large tour buses cannot negotiate gravel or dirt roads easily, or drivers will sometimes be prohibited from doing so.

II. Route map and time travel estimate

A. Drive the route at the same time of day and same day of week as tour is scheduled. Drive slowly and carefully, realizing that buses require more time to get up to cruising speed, and must negotiate turns more slowly than cars. Allow adequate time for unloading and loading at each stop.

B. Field trip usually departs from conference hotel site at 8 AM and returns by 5:00 or 5:30 PM.

C. Provide map and/or written directions to the bus company in advance of the field trip.

III. Choice of lunch and morning/afternoon break stops

A. Choose sites in conjunction with informational stops when possible.

- B. Even though the buses may be restroom-equipped, participants greatly appreciate having restrooms available at mid-morning and mid-afternoon stops.
- C. When using a commercial restaurant, the facility should be able to serve a large group with minimum delay (buffet-type restaurant is best). Try to arrive before the noon rush (arrive at 11:30 to 11:45 AM).
- D. Ideally, there should be adequate space to accommodate multiple serving lines, multiple restrooms, etc., without participants having to wait in line for more than a few minutes.
- E. Consider menu simplicity and acceptance by group. Typically, there are few if any vegetarians among our participants. However, people are increasingly conscious of healthy menu and beverage choices.
- F. Make arrangements in advance with the restaurant/caterer for payment, including any appropriate gratuity.
- G. Call restaurant /caterer within one week prior to field trip to confirm arrangements.

IV. Choose local provider of buses. Companies typically charge based on hours (from their facility's departure point until the bus returns empty) and mileage driven. Buses should have restrooms for the passengers and PA systems for tour guides .

- A. Recommendations from hotel, local chamber of commerce, convention center, or listings in the yellow pages.
- B. Request flyers or price schedules.
- C. Request insurance coverage information in writing.
- D. Seek comments from CHP inspections.
- E. Provide draft description of route (miles, hours) as a basis for seeking competitive bids from at least 2 bus companies.
- E. Confirm with the bus company that the buses will be at a specific loading site (usually specified by the hotel) at least 15 minutes prior to departure time. Confirm this within 1 week prior to the field trip.
- F. Check on deposits required – amount and date due.
- G. Determine when final payment is due, and convey this information to the VPC Business Manager.
- H. Arrange to provide appropriate gratuities directly to drivers (not to bus company), upon conclusion of trip.

V. VPC field trip registration

- A. Handled with general pre-registration. Fee is usually set in consultation with the VPC Business Manager so that the field trip is self-supporting (costs to be covered include buses, driver gratuities, lunch and gratuity, morning and afternoon refreshments, copying of handout materials, batteries for portable PA equipment, bottled water, etc.)
- B. Late registration: If space is available following pre-registration or there are a few no-shows who have pre-registered , then last-minute registrants can be added to the field trip.. This should be handled by personnel, typically

Council members, at the conference registration desk. Adequate pre-registration materials (receipts; ability to make change for field trip fee and field trip hand-outs) should be available for late registrants. The conference registration desk with field trip materials should be open for one to two hours the night before the field trip and then one hour prior to loading the buses on the morning of the field trip.

- C. Provide signage in hotel lobby, as appropriate with hotel, to let people know on the evening before the field trip when and where buses will load the next morning.

VI. Tour guides (at least one per bus).

- A. Potential tour guides: local farm advisors, Ag. Commissioner staff, others knowledgeable about local wildlife-human conflicts and management.
- B. Discuss with tour guides in advance the agenda, specific route, and content for each stop, as well as schedule. Allow them sufficient lead time to prepare comments appropriate for what will be seen en route, and to provide input on potential modifications to route that would allow participants to see a great diversity of sights.

VII. On-site speakers – to speak at each tour stop

- A. May include growers, local wildlife damage operators, researchers, wildlife managers, or others knowledgeable about specific history and damage at the site.
- B. Make sure they understand the planned time limit for the stop; they should give a concise summary and allow enough time for questions and discussion.

VIII. Communication

- A. Post signs at hotel (subject to hotel permission) the evening before the field trip indicating location of bus departure location, and time of loading and departure.
- B. It is very much appreciated by participants to provide them with a map of the tour area, and additional information on what will be seen at each planned stop or en route. General information on the region's agriculture, crops, and wildlife is always well received. If possible, make this information available to participants the evening before the field trip, or prior to loading the buses on the morning of the trip.
- C. Introduce tour guides and site speakers, or they can self-introduce if they're prepared in advance to do this; get introductory info in advance, if needed.

IX. Duties on the bus

- A. Field trip coordinator provides two portable PA units (wireless microphones are best) for use at site stops.
- B. Provide each bus with bottled water; and a receptacle to recycle plastic bottles as well, rather than leaving trash for the bus driver.
- C. Tour guides narrate along tour route on bus PA system. Subjects to discuss can include crop production general information, crop identification, local

points of interest, discussion of animal damage problems in area, and how problems are dealt with.

- X.** Field trip chairperson should send **thank-you notes** to all site speakers, bus tour guides, and other presenters, with copies to appropriate supervisors or agency heads.