



**PLACER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE  
WEIGHTS AND MEASURES**

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**CHRISTINE E. TURNER**  
Agricultural Commissioner/  
Sealer of Weights and Measures

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors  
FROM: Christine E. Turner, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer  
DATE: January 22, 2008  
SUBJECT: **Presentation on the October 2007 Placer Farm & Barn Tour**

*CET by [Signature]*

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**ACTION REQUESTED:** None – Informational Presentation Only

**BACKGROUND:** The 4th Annual Placer Farm & Barn Tour was held on Sunday, October 14, 2007 and the event has proven to be very popular, educational and successful over the past four years. It is time to share the success of this farm tour with the Board of Supervisors and the general public.

Respectfully submitted,

ORIGINAL SIGNED  
Christine E. Turner  
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

## **The Placer Farm & Barn Tour 2004-2007: An Agricultural Community Success Story**

The Placer Farm & Barn Tour was conceived by members of the agricultural community and the agencies that serve them as a way to promote agritourism and help connect area residents with local farmers and ranchers. Making the connection between consumers and local farmers and ranchers is vital to preserving and sustaining local agriculture. The Farm & Barn Tour has evolved to be a community partnership, the result of close collaboration among area growers and numerous local agricultural, arts, historical, and community service organizations.

The mission of the Placer Farm and Barn Tour is to:

- Connect area residents with local farmers and share the agricultural bounty and beauty of our county
- Educate the non-agricultural public about local agriculture
- Make Placer County an agricultural tourism destination
- Build a philosophically and economically active support base for Placer County agriculture

In providing an opportunity for the non-farm community to visit and experience local farms, county residents become more aware of the importance of local agriculture and support it economically by shopping locally and philosophically by voting for measures and candidates that support local agriculture. Other goals include sharing the bounty and beauty of our county and making Placer County an agricultural tourism destination.

The Farm & Barn Tour is a one-day self-guided tour of local farms, and provides an array of farming and ranching demonstrations, tours, tastings of local produce, hands-on activities, and talks on agricultural practices and history. It also features AGROart™, where participants compete to build sculptures from local produce.

The Farm and Barn Tour began in 2004, with six farms and about 700 visitors. It now hosts over 2,000 visitors for the one-day event each October. The Tour is spread throughout western Placer County, and each venue has a number of activities, so most participants only visit two or three farms and ranches. In 2007, each farm venue received an average of 350 visitors, with actual counts ranging from 197 to 674. The 2007 Tour included a citrus orchard, an aquatic plant nursery, flower farms, cattle and sheep ranches, vineyards and wineries, the Bernhard Museum, with its agricultural roots, and the historic Blue Goose Fruit Shed, the venue for AGROart™.

In order to assess the impact of the Tour, we conducted a participant survey. 143 surveys, representing 463 participants (one respondent per party), were completed at the 2007 Tour. 72% of those surveyed were participating in the Tour for the first time, and 94.5% said they do it again.

The Farm & Barn Tour represents a unique opportunity to connect area residents with local farms. 58.9% of survey respondents had not visited a local farm before the Tour. Many participants are, however, interested in supporting local agriculture. More than a third, 37.4%, said they buy local produce weekly, mostly at Certified Farmers' Markets, but also at local produce stores and directly from the farm. Two-thirds (67.5%) of respondents say they buy local produce at least once a month. The remaining third (32.5%) buy local produce infrequently (a couple times a year) or not at all. However, almost three-quarters of respondents (74.5%) stated that they would be more likely to buy local produce after participating in the Farm & Barn Tour.

The majority of participants are area residents, but the tour attracts visitors from other states as well as all of northern California. Each year there are more visitors, many repeat participants, but many new ones, as well. The Tour has succeeded in linking residents with local farms and has been a great educational outreach, especially to those who were not aware of local agriculture. It has resulted in stronger links between consumers and farmers and increased on-farm and farmers' market customer traffic.

In addition to connecting area resident with growers, the Tour brings the grower community together and has served to help participating growers begin to develop agritourism ventures. Several growers who never considered opening their farm to the public prior to the tour have renovated barns, set up displays, improved parking, and begun hosting public events. The tour provides an easy one-day foray into agritourism with support from the community and other growers. It is truly a community effort, with growers acting as site coordinators, volunteering with parking on the day of the event or selling their products and demonstrating their skills.

The tour is coordinated by a Steering Committee of ten to fifteen people, including growers, agricultural and community agencies, and other ag supporters. The committee meets monthly for eight or nine months each year to plan the Tour. Membership on the Committee changes from year to year, but many committed members and volunteers have been involved since the beginning.

Partners in the Placer Farm and Barn Tour include:

1. Over 20 local farms and ranches which have served as hosts
2. High Sierra Resource Conservation & Development Council
3. Placer County Ag Department
4. Placer County Ag Marketing Program
5. University of California Cooperative Extension
6. Placer County Resource Conservation District
7. PlacerArts
8. Sierra College Environmental Horticulture Department
9. Mountain Mandarin Growers' Association
10. Placer County Wine and Grape Association
11. Foothill Farmers' Market Association
12. Placer/Nevada Cattlewomen
13. PlacerGrown
14. Placer Land Trust
15. Auburn Garden Club
16. UCCE Master Gardeners
17. Del Oro Future Farmers of America
18. Lincoln Future Farmers of America
19. Placer High Future Farmers of America
20. Miners Ravine 4-H Club
21. Gold Country 4-H Club
22. Dry Creek 4-H Club
23. Ophir 4-H Club
24. Eureka Granite Bay 4-H Club
25. California Association of Nurserymen
26. Natural Resources Conservation Service
27. Sierra Club
28. Mueur Group
29. Boy Scout Troop 12
30. Auburn Boys & Girls Club
31. Mosquito Abatement District