



Minimize Traffic Congestion on Rural Roads:

1. Going with the flow—Farmers monitor the neighborhood for times of increased or decreased traffic and try to move equipment between fields during times of low traffic. Sometimes movement at other times may be unavoidable, so being patient and safe is recommended.
2. Learn the established schedule—Farmers usually maintain schedules for their crops, which enables you to adjust travel times when necessary. During the active farming season—spring through fall—agriculture equipment for tilling, planting, and harvesting will be on the road. It may be necessary to leave ample time for travel or commuting.
3. Look for the signs—Farm equipment such as tractors, plows, and combines can be very large. Many will have warning or hazard signs. This helps on rural roads to inform all drivers to be cautious and reduce the potential for accidents. Because of the size, farm equipment will be traveling slowly and make wide turns. Be especially cautious if you decide to pass. Make sure there is enough room and time.

“The main problems that I see come from when I run the large machinery on the roads. People get annoyed being stuck behind it and it can be dangerous if people are speeding. To help this I have my wife drive the truck on the road with me to get cars to slow down. The county helped a lot by creating road signs that warn about large, slow-moving vehicles on the roads.”—225-acre beef and grain farmer, Harford County



“We also don’t run the tractor on the roads when school lets out at 3 o’clock and on Sunday when people are going to church.

We live next to a church and we don’t want to interrupt services.”—Horse farmer in Carroll County with 640 acres

Population and land development will continue to increase in Maryland’s agricultural areas, as those in population centers seek a life at a more relaxed pace. Newly minted rural residents can best prepare for the resulting growth and expansion by recognizing the issues and fostering good neighbor relations. Remember that one of the reasons you moved out to a rural area was because of the farm scenery and ambience but farming is more than that. It is a business and way of life to those involved and an important part of our state’s economy. To ensure it continues, farmers must operate in a cost-effective and productive manner. Therefore it is important for everyone to be respectful, understanding, and patient in rural communities.

For more information, contact your local University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Office at www.extension.umd.edu or Maryland Farm Bureau at www.mdfarmbureau.com/1-410-922-3426. If differences cannot be reconciled, mediation services are available through Maryland Department of Agriculture, www.mda.state.md.us/1-410-841-5700.

Kurt Fuchs
Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Shannon Dill
Extension Educator
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Lori Lynch
Associate Professor & Extension Specialist
Agricultural and Resource Economics

Jessica Jones
Student, University of Maryland



The cooperating agencies’ programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, or national origin.

Produced with support from the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office.



Welcome to the Neighborhood



Living in a Rural Community

There are many ideas that come to mind when imagining a rural community—quaint towns, expansive cropland, and cattle contentedly grazing. But at times living in a rural community is not always as picturesque or convenient. This can be due to services that may or may not be available, industry in the area, and transportation. In rural communities one of the largest and most important industries is agriculture.

by state and federal governments often alleviates concerns about farm practices.

3. Asking for information early—You can ask for information on farm practices of concern. In addition, many farmers inform the community of practices and the reasons for them. Many rural newspapers and radio and television stations do an excellent job of covering relevant agricultural news and announcements. This can help you understand and prevent possible conflicts within the farm community.

“I went over and talked to the neighbors when they moved in. I tell the ones living right next door when I will be spreading manure. I don’t spread the manure on weekends or holidays. You have to be a good neighbor and talk.”—225-acre beef and grain farmer, Harford County

“We discuss environmentally friendly practices and what we can do to help. Having your neighbors know that we’re trying to help really makes a difference.”—Poultry and grain farmer in Wicomico County

Issue 4. Increase of Traffic Congestion on Rural Roads

The increased congestion on rural roads, which are often narrow and at various levels of upkeep, present challenges for commuters traveling to school and work and for farmers moving equipment.

“When it comes to tractors, they can seem really annoying for people because they move 15 to 20 miles an hour.”—Crop, hay, and grain farmer in Frederick County with 400 acres

In Maryland there are over 2 million acres of farmland producing various crops and livestock. These farms are essential to the economy, food supply, and rural areas. Agriculture is part of everyone's life—from food we eat to clothes we wear to products we use.

The primary commodities are corn, soybeans, wheat, poultry, cattle, horses, fruits and vegetables. Agriculture also includes forestry, nursery and seafood industries as well as secondary industries that support agriculture such as farm supplies, processing, and marketing. Overall, Maryland's industry is diverse. A variety of acreage, products, and inputs are needed to grow and sustain crops and livestock. Some farms may need large barns or facilities while others may need open fields. Many farms require machinery to get the job done.

As new people move to rural areas, there has been an increase in concerns and at times misunderstandings about the agriculture industry. Sometimes these concerns lead to conflict between farm and nonfarm neighbors. Now that Maryland ranks fifth among the 50 states in population density, changes in rural areas are bound to occur.

“The area around my farm has changed a lot.”—Produce farmer with 200 acres in Cecil County

“The neighborhood has changed and the town is growing rapidly.”—Farmer with 150-acre orchard in Washington County

With change can come conflict. What are the reasons behind conflict? How can these conflicts be resolved? Maryland farmers have been surveyed about changes and conflicts in rural communities and have provided ideas about creating and maintaining positive relationships in rural communities. Learn from their experiences and follow advice about being a good neighbor and rural resident.

Through surveys, Maryland farmers have identified four areas of concern in rural areas:

1. Lack of Farm Awareness
2. Trespassing and Property Rights
3. Health and Environmental Concerns
4. Increase of Traffic Congestion on Rural Roads

Read on to learn more about these issues and how you can help build a better, more harmonious community.

Issue 1. Lack of Farm Awareness

Farmers agree that many new rural residents have never lived on a farm or by a farm before. Many of them do not understand the ins and outs of agricultural production. For example, newcomers to rural areas tend to be unaware of crop cycles, livestock management, and the farm business. Coming to their new neighborhood with limited information means that new homeowners can make the wrong assumptions about certain practices and/or harbor misconceptions about farming.

“The problem is that nonfarmers don't know what you're doing.”—Grain farmer renting 600 acres in Caroline County

“People come up to my farm and inquire about why I do certain things. You have to talk to them.”—Vegetable farmer renting 500 acres in Dorchester County

Three Ways to Increase Your Farm Awareness:

1. Communication—Talk directly to your farming neighbors. Communication is your most effective tool to educate yourself about farming. Informal neighborly discussions are a great way to discuss the farm and its operations.
2. Education—Take time to research and learn more about agriculture in your community. Your local University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Office, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and Maryland Farm Bureau offer a lot of information about the agriculture industry and farming practices.
3. Farm visits and farm education—Attend farm tours, educational visits, county fairs, and open houses. You'll be able to meet members of the farming community and learn what it takes to manage a successful agricultural operation.

“I invite neighbors and people from the community to visit my farm and see what it's all about. Problems arise when there's secrecy and distance between your farm and the community. Explain what you're doing and why. Be open and kind.”—Hog, sod, hay, corn, and soybean farmer in Montgomery County with 300 acres

“On our land we also do this wetland preservation program where we're protecting 6 acres and a stream that goes into a wetland. This shows people that you're trying to help the community.”—Alpaca farmer in Washington County with 30 acres

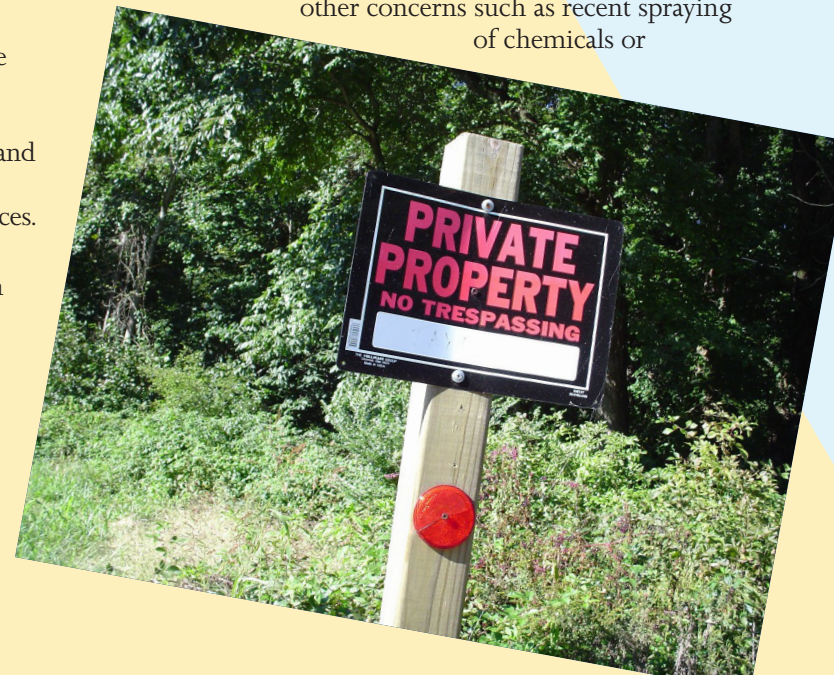
Issue 2. Trespassing and Property Rights

Farms and farmland are private property, even though the open space may look to some like a public or recreational area. When you enter private property uninvited, you could put yourself in danger, or cause damage to a crop, the soil, or the management of the land.

“People encroach on my land and don't realize that a farm is private property. They'll drive through your fields, camp in your fields, and treat your farm as public property.”—Cecil County produce farmer with 200 acres

Reduce Trespassing and Respect Property Rights:

1. Recognize and respect farm boundaries—Many farms have marked boundaries that indicate where public property ends and private land begins. Pay attention to these boundaries and respect them.
2. Look for danger warnings—Watch for signs that inform the public about the presence of animals or other concerns such as recent spraying of chemicals or



fertilizer. Signage notifies you that there is danger ahead and warns you to take care or avoid the area.

3. Communication—Discuss boundaries and crop production schedules with farm neighbors so you understand animal safety, chemical applications, and crop planting. In building a relationship with your farmer neighbor, he/she will most likely try to create a schedule for jobs such as manure spreading or chemical application for a time that least inconveniences you both.

“I created natural buffers to define property lines. Put some trees and shrubs there that look nice but also make it clear where borders are.”—Produce farmer in Anne Arundel County with 77 acres

“I double fenced my farm to ensure that people understand the boundaries.”—Horse farmer in Carroll County with 640 acres

Issue 3. Health and Environmental Concerns

Many standard farm practices involve animals, odors, fertilizers, insects, dust, and pesticides. These unfamiliar sights and smells often raise health, safety, and environmental concerns in the nonfarming community.

“I get complaints about spray drifting onto cars and lawns.”—Washington County orchard farmer with 150 acres

“They worry because they think pesticides are dangerous or because the smell is strong.”—Grain, hay, and beef farmer in Montgomery County with 850 acres

Ease Health and Environmental Concerns:

1. Consistency—Farms have routines for crop production. This allows you to expect specific practices on certain days or at certain times of the year such as planting in the spring and harvesting in the fall. Most farm practices, even though occasionally inconvenient, are seasonal and temporary.
2. Knowing regulations—Farmers are required to maintain appropriate licensing and records, and follow regulatory guidelines. By doing this they protect your health and safety as well as the environment's. Realizing that farms are regulated