

A GUIDE TO COUNTRY LIVING



IN APPANOOSE COUNTY, IOWA

<http://appanoosecounty.net/>

Moving to the Country

Welcome to Farm Country

Country living in Southeast Iowa can be a wonderful way of life, but only if your expectations for country living are in line with reality.

The peace and tranquility people often associate with the countryside draw many people to rural areas. Generally what they find is they have really only have traded the benefits and drawbacks of city living for those of country living. Here are several things you need to know about agriculture in Appanoose County when you decide to have a rural address.

Moving to the country means many of your neighbors will be farmers and ranchers. Here the work day generally starts early and ends late. Much of the work farmers do involves the use of large farm equipment.

These activities are not only necessary, but essential to the area farmers as they work to produce food and fiber for our nation and the world. The State of Iowa and Appanoose County citizens have recognized the importance of these activities through "Right to Farm" laws that help protect established farm operations using normal management practices from nuisance suits.

Normal Agricultural Practices

Agriculture's heavy reliance on farm equipment means daytime and even nighttime peace and quiet can sometimes be disturbed. This is especially true during spring and fall when field work is at its peak.



Standard farming practices such as tillage, harvesting, and haying can generate dust and blowing crop debris, especially during dry and windy conditions. Dust associated with those activities can and will invade your home and vehicles.

Burning road ditches, waterways and other grassy areas is also standard practice when Appanoose County is not under a burn ban issued by the Centerville Fire Chief. Farmers use burning to keep those areas free from weeds and to promote native plant growth. Burning can cause smoke you may find objectionable. Many area farmers also use crop production and protection products that aid in growing abundant and healthy crops. These products are applied by certified applicators who are trained to properly handle and apply them.

As a rural resident, it's important to recognize property lines when farmers engage in these activities on adjoining lands. The Iowa State University Extension Service is an excellent source to learn more about the farming practices of your neighbors.



Livestock Production

Livestock production is the cornerstone of agriculture in Iowa and is present in Appanoose County. Beef, dairy, chicken and some swine operations are scattered across the landscape of Appanoose County and Southern Iowa. Many of the crops grown in the area are fed directly to livestock, creating one of the most efficient food-producing chains in the country. Animals and their manure, however, can cause objectionable odors.

Farmers use Best Management Practices to limit odor from their operations and in the application of manure onto their fields. For many producers, manure serves as a valuable source of organic

fertilizer for crops. Many times, farmers that do not own livestock will contract with farmers that do own livestock to apply manure to their fields.

Despite farmer's best efforts, the elimination of minor odors is virtually impossible, making odor a very real part of country living. Many even call livestock odors "The Smell of Money."

Before buying a rural home-site, be aware of livestock and other agricultural operations in the area and your distance from them. Appanoose County does not have required setbacks from a livestock operation for anyone to build a non-farm home. New livestock operations have required setbacks from existing homes. Even though you might be a quarter, a half, or a full mile from any livestock operation, keep in mind prevailing winds because odors can travel some distance.

Property Lines and Fences

The area's rural residents are friendly and open, but like all landowners, they expect privacy and that private property rights will be respected.



When arriving in your new surroundings, you may be unaware of property boundaries. Make sure you know whose land you are on. Just because an area isn't fenced, it isn't necessarily open to the public. It is also important to realize fences separating properties can be misaligned with property lines. A survey of your land by a licensed surveyor is the best way to confirm the actual boundary of your property.

In addition, Iowa law holds persons with adjoining lands responsible for making and maintaining a just proportion of a legal division fence between them. Even though you may not use or desire a fence, it is possible you could be responsible for up to one-half of the associated costs. Private agreements on fences can be negotiated with neighbors and should be recorded with the Appanoose County Recorder's Office.

It is also your responsibility to make sure children and pets observe property lines, because unfamiliar property can be hazardous. Children also need to know farm animals are not pets and it is not safe to enter pens and pastures where livestock and other animals are kept.

When building a fence near a road be sure to check with the County Engineer before building it so that it is not on the county right of way. In addition keep in mind you are not allowed to park vehicles or equipment in the ditch or along the road right of way.

Local Zoning



Just like the urban landscape, things do change in the country. It is important to realize the land surrounding your property is unlikely to remain the same indefinitely and the view from your property may change.

Zoning is designed to protect the health, safety and welfare of all the citizens in the county by designating specific areas of the county for specific uses. Zoning districts will not only determine who your future neighbors will be, but may also affect future development on your own property.

Chances are if you desire to live on an acreage in the zoned portion of Appanoose County your land and the surrounding land is zoned agricultural. This means you could have fields or pastures come right to your property lines. Non-farm single family homes are a permitted use in an agricultural zoned district. This means you must apply for a zoning certificate to build a non-farm home in an agricultural zoned district. Most of Appanoose County is not zoned and the zoning certificate is not required. The Northwest quarter of Appanoose County is zoned and in particular

a map of the zoned area is shown on the last page of the Appanoose County Zoning Ordinance located on the web at <http://www.appanoosecounty.net/disclaimer.html>.

Not all lots can be built on. The Appanoose County Assessor has many parcels that are separate for the purpose of taxation that are not legal lots in the sense that a zoning certificate will be issued if in the zoned area. You must check with the Appanoose County Zoning Administrator located at the County Engineer's Office to know that a piece of land can be built on when the land is in the zoned area of Appanoose County. A portion of Appanoose County is zoned and a zoning certificate is required for all non-agriculture related structures. If you buy a property that has structures on it that were built without a permit, you may be liable for obtaining a permit and bringing the structure up to current code requirements. Check with the Appanoose County Zoning Administrator for additional information.

Easements may require you to allow construction of roads, power lines, water lines, sewer lines, etc. across your land. There may be easements that are not of record. Check these issues carefully. You may be provided with a plat of your property, but unless the land has been surveyed and pins placed by a licensed surveyor, you cannot assume that the plat is accurate.

Utilities and Other Services

Necessities such as water, sewer, electric, telephone, internet connections and other services for your rural property may not be as readily available or not operate at the same standards as those in urban areas. Severe weather can knock out phone lines and rural power lines. Repairs to these services can take much longer in the country. Even cellular phones will not work in all areas.

Sewer and water needs may also require special attention. Rural water and sewer service may be available in some areas with costs associated with hookup to rural lines. Monthly cost of service can be costly when compared to municipal systems. In most rural settings, however, an approved septic system or treatment process will be required to handle sewage needs. In addition, the drilling of water wells may be required. It is important to investigate the costs associated with these items when looking to buy or build in rural Iowa. A permit for this type of facility construction can be obtained from ADLM Environmental Health.



Electric power may not be available in two phase and three phase configurations. If you have special power requirements, it is important to know what level of service can be provided to your property. It can be costly to extend power lines to remote areas and it may be necessary to cross property owned by others in order to extend electric service to your property in the most efficient manner. It is important to make sure that the proper easements are in place to allow lines to be built to your property. If purchasing land with the plan to build at a future date, there is a possibility that electric lines (and other utilities) may not be large enough to accommodate you if others connect during the time you wait to build. Be sure to inquire about hook up and service fees as well as usage costs associated with energy consumption and installations. Power outages can occur in outlying areas with more frequency than in more developed areas. A loss of electric power can also interrupt your supply of water from a well. You may also lose food in freezers or refrigerators as well as experience problems with computers from power outages. It is important to be prepared to survive for up to a week due to severe cold and loss of utilities if you live in the country.

Trash removal can be much more expensive in a rural area than in a city. It is illegal to create your own trash dump, even on your own land. It is good to know the cost for trash removal and the costs associated to haul your own trash to a landfill or transfer station before moving to the country.

Mail delivery may not be available to all areas of the county. Ask the postmaster to describe the system for your area. Newspaper delivery is similarly not always available to rural areas. Check with the newspaper of your choice before assuming you can get delivery. Standard parcel and overnight package delivery can be a problem for those who live in the country. Confirm with the service providers as to your status.

Access

Rural residents must also become accustomed to slower emergency response. Unlike urban living, law enforcement, fire assistance, and medical care can be located several miles away. Most emergency responses take longer in the country simply because of your location. Some emergency response services may be provided by volunteers. In addition you may be able to drive to your property but that does not guarantee that emergency vehicles can achieve that same level of access at all times. There can be problems with legal aspects of access, especially if you gain access across property belonging to others. It is wise and helpful to obtain legal advice and understand the easements that may be necessary when these types of questions arise. Many large construction vehicles can't navigate small narrow roadways. If you plan to build it is prudent to check out construction access.

Rural Roads

A move to the country also means leaving behind the comforts of paved city streets. Most rural roads simply do not receive the same maintenance and attention as their urban counterparts. You can experience problems with the maintenance and the cost of maintenance of the road you live on. Appanoose County maintains almost 765 miles of roads, but private roads that are maintained by private road associations serve some rural properties. Some county roads receive no maintenance and some receive minimal maintenance which means no routine blading, no surfacing and in some cases no snow plowing. Make sure you know what type of maintenance to expect and who will provide that maintenance.



Gravel, dirt and oil roads are the norm in Appanoose County, making dust and dings to vehicles part of the country experience. Loose gravel not only chips paint, but can also crack windshields. The summer heat is also notorious for softening blacktop roadways and can cause oil splatters on vehicles. A gravel road that drives "well" represents a delicate balance between being too wet, (mud, ruts, slippery) and being too dry (potholes, washboards (corrugations) and dust). The condition of the road can go from good to bad in a matter of a few hours depending on rain, snow, temperature, and traffic type or patterns which are matters that Appanoose County has no control over. Appanoose County will permit landowners to have a contractor apply dust control at their expense during certain time of the year. Contact the Appanoose County Engineer for dust control information. Even though a dust control product is applied to your road dust is still a fact of life for most rural residents.

Rural roads are also affected to a greater degree by Iowa's unpredictable weather conditions. In extreme winters, rural roads can become impassable due to drifting snow. It can take several days for the county to provide normal access. Lesser storms can also cause delays and create travel hazards on county roads, and roadway flooding is common in the summer months when the area's creeks and streams fill from substantial rains. During these conditions the roadways may become impassable. You may need a four wheel drive vehicle during extreme winter conditions with chains for all four wheels and there may be times when you can not make it to work. Your employer may not be understanding of your decision to live in a rural setting. Appanoose County provides services in accordance with county policies, and it does not provide

explanations to employers for absences. School busses travel only on maintained county roads. You may need to drive your children to the nearest county road so they can get to school.

If your road is gravel, it is very unlikely that Appanoose County will pave it in the foreseeable future. Check carefully with the County Road Department when any statement is made by the seller of any property that indicates any gravel roads will be paved!



Rural Vehicles

Those who move to the country generally enjoy decreased traffic flow on roadways, but they must also become accustomed to a different variety of road user. Farm equipment is commonplace and may slow travel in rural areas. Tractors, combines and trucks are large and slow-moving, but are vital to farm operations.

Tractors generally move at top speeds of 15 to 20 miles per hour, so be on the lookout. This is especially true in the spring during planting season and the fall during harvest. You may come up on them quickly from behind. Farmers recognize they are moving slowly and will let you pass as soon as it is safe for them to pull over. Be patient. It's the country thing to do. The Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblem displayed on the rear of farm equipment is also an important sign to know when driving rural roads. The SMV emblem has a red-orange fluorescent triangle at its center, surrounded by a highly reflective red border. Recognize it and know it is a warning to slow down.



Know the Neighborhood

Getting to know your neighbors and letting them get to know you is the fastest way to be accepted as a new arrival in the neighborhood. Just because you may not be able to see the closest home from any of your windows doesn't mean you do not have any neighbors. It is best to meet the individuals living near your new home as soon as you decide to buy in the country.

Like any situation, building good relationships is key to avoiding potential conflicts in the future. Become a part of your rural community. Do not just keep a house in the country while spending your time and dollars elsewhere. Getting involved in local community, school, and organizational events and patronizing local businesses is a great way to make acquaintances and friends in your new surroundings.

A Fulfilling Country Experience

Living in the country can be a wonderful way of life for you and your family. Upfront recognition of what to expect and planning properly before making the move can make the experience much more enjoyable.

Please contact the following Appanoose County offices with your specific questions.

ADLM Environmental Health, 101 E. Van Buren, Centerville 641-437-1909

Assessor, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-437-4529

Attorney, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-437-7178

Auditor, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-856-6191

Board of Supervisors, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-856-5512

Conservation, Sharon Bluffs State Park, Centerville 641-856-8528

Emergency Management, 101 E. Van Buren, Centerville 641-437-1909

Engineer, 1200 Hwy 2 West, Centerville 641-856-6193

Planning and Zoning, 1200 Hwy 2 West, Centerville 641-856-6193

Public Health Office, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-437-4332

Recorder, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-856-6103

Sheriff, 1125 W. Van Buren, Centerville 641-437-7100

Treasurer, 201 N. 12th., Centerville 641-856-3097

Veterans Affairs, 209 E. Jackson, Centerville 641-856-6597

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