

March 15, 2017 – 9:00-10:30am

Agriculture Enterprise Bill Testimony

Madam chair and members of the committee:

Clara Ayer - Fairmont Farm – East Montpelier – I do support this bill with a few small changes to the private events section.

- 3rd generation family dairy farm
- Amongst other achievements, our family is most proud of preserving our family relationships while successfully transferring ownership from older the generations to the younger generations
 - The youngest generation, myself and my brother, came back to the farm in 2014 after graduating from Cornell University and then working off the farm in the industry first. Myself as a Loan Officer, and my brother as a Holstein Classifier.
 - Growth has been our farms solution to supporting multiple families while providing the ability to buy out our senior generation. Now with limited space for continued growth, we are exploring other ways to make room on our farm for future generations.

Large Dairy Farm – Operating under both a LFO and a MFO

- Milk 1500 cows at three locations, raising all of our youngstock. This is roughly 3,000 animals including milking cows, dry cows and youngstock.
- Cropping about 3,600 acres, primarily no-till with a cover crop.
 - 1,600 acres of corn
 - 2,000 acres of hay
- Own 1,675 acres of conserved land through the Vermont Land Trust.

On Farm Business' and Events is one way we are creating diversification on our farm. This not only brings in additional income, but helps us bring a diversified group of people to our farm to meet our family, learn about what we do, and give back to our community. As time goes on we believe a huge part of farming will involve connecting with our consumers, that continue to get further removed from farming, this is one reason we love getting people to the farm in any way possible. We also recognize the effect we have on our neighbors, being a large farm with large equipment, and by opening our doors to others in the community we feel we can let them share in some of the benefits of farming.

Some types of events we have on our farm:

- Summer Camps
- Farm Tours
- Partner with local Schools – Field Trips and Fuel Up to Play 60
- Open Farm Sunday – Cabot
- Breakfast on the Farm – VT Agency of Agriculture
- Private Events – Birthday Parties, Anniversaries, Weddings etc.
- Livestock Sale – Genetics - 2018

This is an important issue for farms of all types and sizes, I sincerely thank you for your efforts!

It is my understanding, at the most basic, that the purpose of this bill is to prevent municipalities from regulating events, or on farm businesses, of farms that are regulated by the VT Agency of Agriculture. However, this is not a giveaway to farmers as this bill still allows municipalities to regulate parking, noise, lights, and screening amongst other standards.

I appreciate all the work that has gone into the bill to get to this point. **I could support the bill if the number of events allowed was increased from 12 events a year to 24, and the number of guests per event was increased.** Another note worth mentioning is the potable water and wastewater system permit, we rely on portable toilets for all events.

Thank you again for your time and for having me, any questions?