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Penn State reminds public of policy limiting access to Rock Springs facility

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — From a distance, [Penn State's Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center](#), along state Route 45 at Rock Springs, looks like just typical picturesque farmland — green pastures and barns. But if you look more closely, you'll learn that it's a hub for cutting-edge research and innovative education conducted by the [College of Agricultural Sciences](#).

Protecting the integrity of that research is critical, so the college is issuing a reminder that entry into the agricultural research center is limited to authorized personnel only; public access to all research farms, field plots, grass and gravel lanes and roadways, buildings, and forests is prohibited.

“Penn State and the College of Agricultural Sciences are home to some of the world's premier research facilities, centers and institutes,” said Steve Loerch, senior associate dean. “Here, scientists are leading transformative research to confront the pressing challenges of food and the environment.”

Research and education conducted at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center have the same goal — better food and farming for the health of society and the environment. Current studies at this living laboratory focus on fruits, vegetables, grains, weeds, soil, insects, fish, water, farming techniques and other topics.

Loerch explained that “Authorized Personnel Only” has been a long-standing policy at the 2,200-acre research center. However, a recent increase in people using the grounds for recreational purposes such as hiking, biking and dog walking has prompted the college to issue a reminder and place new signage around the grounds.

“Biosecurity is a primary concern, as loss of research by accident or intentional vandalism is a risk that must be mitigated,” said Loerch, who added that personnel authorized to be on the site include center staff and faculty, students and field technicians presently conducting research.

Most of the produce grown at the site is used for research. However, rotational crops not used in studies provide feed for university livestock, support programs such as the fall festival, and are donated to regional food pantries. Green material is used for compost or turned back into the soil.

Anyone interested in learning about research and the agricultural innovations that have emerged from the research center since its founding more than 50 years ago are encouraged to attend the annual [Ag Progress Days](#) exposition, which takes place in August. Free, daily bus tours will

make stops at the Agronomy, Entomology, Horticulture and Plant Pathology research farms, among other sites.

Though Ag Progress Days is the largest event held at the site, several other important functions are open to the public throughout the year, including the Pennsylvania Forest Products Equipment and Technology Exposition — often called the Pennsylvania Timber Show — every other June and the Centre County [Master Gardener](#) plant sale in May.

The [Pasto Agricultural Museum](#), which holds special events throughout the year and tours by appointment, connects our agricultural past with present-day practices and cutting-edge research in food and fiber systems, environmental issues, and natural resources.

Personnel at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center appreciate the public's cooperation and understanding.

More information about the center, frequently asked questions and a listing of public events can be found online at <https://agsci.psu.edu/acre>.

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